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THE IDEA OF THE GOOD IN KANT AND HEGEL

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The Idea of the Good in Kant and Hegel

Contents

Part Three: Between Good and Evil

List of Abbreviations

The following are the abbreviations used in this volume for the original German texts and selected translations. References to Kant's works are to the Akademie edition (AA), collected in *Werke in 9 Bände, Unveränderter photomechanischer Abdruck des Textes der von der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1902 begonnenen Ausgabe von Kants gesammelten Schriften* (Berlin: de Gruyter). Because of their widespread availability, we use two versions of the Complete Works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: (1) *Gesammelte Werke*, in Verbindung mit der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft edited by the Rheinisch-Westphälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Hamburg: Meiner, 1968 ff (GW); and (2) *Werke: Theorie Werkausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. 1986 ff (TWA). Fichte's works are cited according to *J. G. Fichtes Werke*, edited by I. H. von Fichte, 1845–6. Reprint Berlin 1971 (GA). Volume and page numbers are given for all the editions listed. Other abbreviations refer to individual works. Translations (where used) are listed in the respective bibliography.

HEGEL

GW 4   *Jenaer kritische Schriften*
GW 8   *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*
GW 9   *Phänomenologie des Geistes*
GW 11   *Wissenschaft der Logik. Erster Band. Die objektive Logik (1812/1813)*
GW 12   *Wissenschaft der Logik. Zweiter Band. Die subjektive Logik (1816)*
GW 14   *Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse – Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*

GW 17   *Vorlesungsmanuskripte I (1816-1831)*

GW 20 (Enz.) *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse [1830]*

GW 21   *Wissenschaft der Logik. Erster Teil. Die Objektive Logik. Erster Band. Die Lehre vom Sein (1832)*

GW 23   *Vorlesungen über die Wissenschaft der Logik I*

GW 26,1   *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts I*

GW 26,2   *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts II*

GW 26,3   *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts III*

GW 29   *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion und Vorlesungen über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes*

Ilt 4   *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie (1818–1831), Band 4*

TWA 2   *Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807*

TWA 3   *Phänomenologie des Geistes*

TWA 5   *Wissenschaft der Logik I*

TWA 6   *Wissenschaft der Logik II*

TWA 7   *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*

TWA 8   *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Band Wissenschaften I*

TWA 10   *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften III*

V 6   *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Teil 1. Einleitung in der Geschichte der Philosophie, Orientalische Philosophie*

V 12   *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte. Berlin 1822/1823*

Individual translations

ETW   *On Christianity: Early Theological Writings*

PM   *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*

PhS   *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*

PR   *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*

KANT

AA 4   *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*

AA 5   *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*

AA 6   *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*

AA 6 (RGV)   *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*

AA 8   *Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis*

KpV   *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788)

KU   *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790)

FICHTE

GA I, 3   *Vergleichung des vom Hrn Prof. Schmid aufgestellten Systems mit der Wissenschaftslehre*

GA I, 5   *Das System der Sittenlehre nach den Principien der Wissenschaftslehre*

Grundlage   *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre.*

SCHELLING

SW 7   *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*

WITTGENSTEIN

BPP   *Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie*

PU   *Philosophische Untersuchungen*

TLP   *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung. Tractatus logico-philosophicus*

ARISTOTLE

EE   *Aristotelis Ethica Eudemia*

EN   *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea*

Met.   *Metaphysics*

Pol.   *Politics*

PLATO

Gorg.   *Gorgias*

Phd   *Phaedo*

Phil.   *Philebus*

Rep.   *The Republic of Plato*

SINGLE WORKS

De Cive   Hobbes, Thomas: *Vom Bürger. Vom Menschen. Dritter Teil der Elemente der Philosophie. Zweiter Teil der Elemente der Philosophie*

NPNF   Augustine, Saint: *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*

Introduction

The Necessary Good and the Genuine Evil

Goran Vranešević

There are two common ways to approach and examine the idea of the good, which follows from the fact that this idea seems so clear and self-evident that people can unconsciously orient themselves according to it. The idea exhibits the universal characteristics of a moral compass that motivates subjects to conduct themselves according to their desire for the good. But although it is a vital existential category, since it acts as the condition of the possibility of existence, there is also an eternal issue attached to it. The capacity to act according to good manners, to do something in good faith, to have good reasons, all depend on being able to demonstrate what is good. The manner in which philosophers deal with this idea can be either to take it as the foundation of ethical life and examine its fundaments to their core, or, to make use of its shadowy other side in the form of evil as a reference point to conceptually ground a broader horizon of possible ways of leading our lives and considering our choices and regrets. The decision to relate a concept to its other can have undesirable consequences, at worst overwhelming the concept under discussion, or at best confronting us with an impasse in such a concept that orients us to its truth. What can be said of the good also depends on how one defines the good.

Perhaps the reference to the idea of the good merely tells us something about the general state of things, but the insight into the underbelly of the good in itself is only possible through a reflection of its conceptual other, conjoined idea of the evil. But far from being an obstacle to understanding the essence of

an idea, this is actually its added value, for it reveals the internal tensions and contradictions inherent in what should be the purest form of actualization.

To define good things thus does not make them exclusively good as there are other properties belonging to it that are often of interest to philosophers; however, once a thing is characterized as good, it becomes antithetical to evil. If taken dogmatically, the pure opposition between good and evil produces innumerable contradictions. Let us take the most convenient example that appears in religious discourse, namely the problem arising from the omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence associated with God's being. It quickly becomes clear that either God is flawed, his status as a pure being put into question, or, a more commonly used logic, a concession must be made regarding the relationship to evil, and thus the logic structuring good becomes internally coupled with evil. However, even a small dose of evil contaminates the purity of the good, but also opens up the possibility that evil simply does not exist.

Such a skeptical approach would mean compromising the traditional premise of religion. A logical programme for the abolition of religion may carry little practical weight, since love and worship of God is a reciprocal relationship in which the choice to abdicate his power is more or less a path presented to believers and not really their own will. In this way, the question of the good becomes self-perpetuating, since the reasons for the good are embedded in the idea of the good, which is God himself. In this sense, the good is not only a matter of judgement, namely the most appropriate conception of the good in relation to the effects it produces, but also a matter of the necessity of belief, so as to ensure any possibility of goodness as such. The theological route, though absolutely productive in itself, leaves the question regarding the status of the good wide open, because with each answer it necessarily produces new contradictions and difficulties, which are the most fertile ground for philosophical inquiry.

The idea of the good has been a focus of philosophers since the dawn of thought. Since Plato, the good has been imbued with a greater value than that of a mere ethical measure, with moral virtue being only its particular instance. Being "greater than justice and the other virtues" (Rep. 504d), the idea can be regarded as an absolute principle, but also as an end and cause, the good is "a surmise and only God knows if it be true" (Rep. 517b). Thus, the good includes everything within itself and there is no external reference to it beyond itself.

In its most basic definition, which is still commonly used in religious, philosophical, political, and other discourses, the good, according to Plato, is that

which is desired, self-sufficient, and complete (Phil. 60c-61a). This is true for all rational beings, that is, all created beings. And this desire for the good becomes an impetus for actions that are regarded as good and thus present a universal character. The good is therefore not a particular want for individual satisfaction, but rather the "norm for Being" (Demos 1937, 249) or even the "source of all being" (Rep. 509d). To be good, then, is to be determined by one-self, to create one's own destiny, one's own formal conditions, and to strive for perfection. This formal aspect also unites opposite determinations, reconciling diversity and contrast within the community (e.g. the most prudent sovereign is good because he is capable of reconciling all his subjects). Most importantly, the good is expressed as a general principle of appropriateness tied to a specific nature (e.g. the virtue of a guillotine is beheading), and as such it is the end of all human action (Rep. 505e). Hence Aristotle's objection that Plato's good is essentially nothing, since it is both the most general and the most particular (EN I 6). Upon these assumptions regarding the status of the good, which seem to disregard actual experience, Plato builds his whole philosophical system. We must remember, however, that there is a gap between actual action and the good life, which must be bridged by the individual's "struggle with one's self, even a sacrifice of one's life" (Gorg. 513d). But while we seek the good through reason and preserve it through discourse, the insight into the good is beyond our knowledge, because it functions as form, and can only be obtained through revelation (it is *epekeina tes ousias*).

It is well known that this transcendence of the good was the main object of Aristotle's criticism, since the transcendence of the good "precludes thinking of it as an idea" (Gadamer 1986, 124). This observation is related to Aristotle's general criticism of Plato's use of ideas, which operate as empty abstractions,[1] but in doing so, he overlooks that the existence of the good is only an appearance of the structural order of the idea of the good. But in Aristotle's reading, such an idea of the good is of no use at all in regards to the good life (EE 1217b23). For him, the good is rather embedded in the maxim that every man should strive for a single end:

> Everyone who has the power to live according to his own choice (προαίρεσις) should dwell on these points and set up for himself some object for the good life to aim at, whether honour or reputation or wealth or culture, by reference to which he will do all that he does, since not to have one's life organised in view of some end is a sign of great folly. Now

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1   "We say first, then, that to say there is an idea not only of the good, but of anything else whatever, is to say something abstract and empty" (EE 1217b20).

above all we must first define to ourselves without hurry or carelessness in which of our possessions the good life consists, and what for men are the conditions of its attainment. (EE 1214b 6-14)

This life is not a life of self-sufficiency for a man by himself, but "an active life of the element that has a rational principle" (EN 1098a 3-4), a life in accordance with virtue, a life for his friends and fellow citizens. Such a life is not imposed on the citizens from the outside as all men have the power and the duty to reflect on their own abilities and desires and to conceive and choose for themselves a satisfactory way of life that is truly good. Both Plato (Rep. 491e) and Aristotle (Pol. 1.2,1252a33-5) presuppose that the striving for the good is more suited to some people than others, but that these natural inclinations towards goodness by themselves also contain the greatest potential for evil. This inclination is linked to the error that even the most well-intentioned deed can be based on desires that go against natural needs.

The good, the highest good, has since been apparently equated with virtuous action, and most philosophical systems are based on it.

The association of the idea of the good with the idea of a functional system goes back at least to Plato (e.g. Rep. I 352d-354b) and Aristotle (EN I 7). To say that something is a good X, they believed, is to say that it has the properties that enable it to perform its function well. (Korsgaard 2015, 145)

Despite a common reading that sees Kant's ethical stance as diametrically opposed to that of Aristotle's (and Plato's and essentially the entire Greek tradition's), there are clear influences present, especially with regard to the highest good, which in the hands of both Aristotle and Kant is a cause of good and the object of hope, since it thus functions as "the condition of the goodness of other goods" (Aufderheide and Bader 2015, 3). Nevertheless, Kant has acquired a privileged place in philosophy, most notably through his ethical theory, which was so far-reaching in its influence that it was referred to as the Copernican revolution in thought. He does indeed, true to tradition, make the good a central concept, but in a way that inverts the relationship between the idea of the good and the moral law, which thus becomes the fundamental principle. The moral ground is therefore not based on pure moral examples, since moral laws cannot be derived from experience, but on a priori principles of morality, even if there is not a single actual case in the world to substantiate them. After all, until Kant, it was considered standard reading that ethical inquiry should begin with the definition of the good, from which the moral law and the concept of obligation should be derived: "all the confusions of philosophers concerning the supreme principle of morals. For

they sought an object of the will in order to make it into the material and the foundation of a law; […] instead they should have looked for a law which directly determined the will a priori and only then sought the object suitable to it" (KpV, AA 5, 64).

Furthermore, Kant's uncompromising ethical stance is that every imputable act and morally responsible agent must be characterized as either good or evil. However, these rigid formal requirements soon came under pressure. Critiques emerged as early as Kant's time, for instance, Pistorius, who, in his review of Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, asked a naïve question: What is good anyway? (*Was ist überhaupt gut?*) Without having a clear idea of whether a will is good, we cannot know what good actually is and this question will remain open.

> In this regard I wish the author had liked to discuss first of all the general concept of what is good, and to determine more precisely what he understands by it; because obviously, we would first have to agree on this before we can make out anything concerning the absolute value of a good will. Therefore, I am entitled to ask first: What is good anyway, and what is a good will in particular? Is it possible to conceive of a will that is good in itself and regarded without relation to any object? If one says: good is that which is generally approved and valued, then I am permitted to ask further why it is approved and valued, does that happen rightly (*mit Recht*) and with reason (*mit Grunde*) or not? General unanimous approval, if this would occur or be possible on anything, would never be able to count as the ultimate decisive reason for a philosophical researcher. (Pistorius 1786, 449)

If laws' existence were sufficient for claiming their moral high ground, then even the most perverse laws could be seen to have some good in them. The only thing that can prevent such arbitrariness in formal morality, according to Pistorius, is a material trace of the good that would ground actions in actual criteria. As is well known, Kant did not seek to provide people with gratification and satisfaction through morality, since an act is good only as a sufficient reason for acting in a certain way. The paradigmatic example given by Kant in the *Critique of Practical Reason* is surgery, which produces no pleasure other than the good of its success. Kant's moral standards are therefore of a different nature. This is precisely why the ethical imperative does not require a how and why justification, because the principle of morality is a formal a priori principle of pure practical reason itself. Only once the principles are determined can we introduce the good, but as that which "we have reason to do" (Kleingeld 2016, 37).

In spite of the categorical demand of reason to follow our duty, a willing subject must freely will the good as its object, and, more importantly, it becomes clear that behind rational activity there may lie "evil reason and hence [is] all the more dangerous" (AA 6, 57). The misfortune it brings is not in the form of certain undesirable practices, but the subordination of our actions to what pleases us. All human beings without exception have a radical, innate, and inextirpable propensity to place the rationally inferior incentives of inclination or self-love ahead of the rationally supreme incentive of morality.[2] In its most drastic form, it appears as the radical evil that Kant introduces in *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (1793), where he seems to seek to mitigate the radical discomfort of the first part of the book by introducing the idea of the good in the second. It is a completely undefinable conception of evil, with little in common with the Enlightenment or religious traditions, for which he was criticized soon after the book's publication for explaining nothing and leaving even more questions unanswered.[3] The radicality of such evil lies not in its perverse nature or in the intensity of its violations of law, but in the fact that it constitutes itself as law and thus interferes with God's affairs. While evil seems to emerge as a sharp contrast to man's free being, which Kant takes as the starting point of the theory of the ethical subject, radical evil is precisely the free act of choosing evil: the possibility of freely choosing one's own unfreedom. At the heart of malice is the act by which "an ethical act is already here, 'realised' – yet always only in a perverted, 'perverse' form" (Zupančič 2000, 86).[4] An even greater scandal is the emancipation of evil from its pairing with good, since the decision to embrace evil is removed from our particular choices, since it operates on a transcendental level. The motive for choosing such an odious possibility remains unresolved. Thus, while the paradigm of transcending the relationship between good and evil has become a permanent feature of contemporary consciousness, the more relevant issue at hand has always been what makes them a fitting pair of radical positions. Without going into detail at this point, the highest of goods and the most radical of evils are nonetheless both expressions of the principle of reason.

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2   "Genuine evil consists in our will not to resist the inclinations when they invite transgression" (ibid.).

3   See, for example, Bernstein (2002), and Michalson, Jr. (1990).

4   "It can also be called the perversity (*perversitas*) of the human heart, for it reverses the ethical order as regards the incentives of a free power of choice; and although with this reversal there can still be legally good (legale)actions, yet the mind's attitude is thereby corrupted at its root (so far as the moral disposition is concerned), and hence the human being is designated as evil" (AA 6 / RGV, 6:31, 54).

Just to recapitulate. For Kant, morality is namely a special duty that obliges finite rational beings to act morally simply because they are rational. His idea of autonomy, his insistence that the good cannot be faithful to the pleasant or the useful, even his second Copernican turn, according to which the good must obey the moral law – and not vice versa – can be understood as a corollary of Kant's peculiar association of moral duty with the unity of reason. However, when he descends to the level of action, he runs into problems of how to demonstrate accurately the determinism of his idea of the good, or how to explain convincingly why a moral subject can act evilly. Hegel, on the other hand, attributed this difficulty to the fact that Kant's conception of reason was abstract, formal, impoverished, and ultimately quite inadequate. In order not to renounce Kant's legacy, he had to formulate a much richer conception of the reason, in which thinking and willing, the particular and the universal, subject and substance, are involved in the free, self-determining activity of the concept. This, according to Hegel, is the minimum if we are to adequately encapsulate the idea of the good.

> [It] happens not infrequently in practical matters that evil will and inertia hide behind the category of possibility, in order to avoid definite obligations in that way; what we said earlier about the use of the principle of "grounding" holds good here, too. Rational, practical people do not let themselves be impressed by what is possible, precisely because it is only possible; instead they hold onto what is actual - and, of course, it is not just what is immediately there that should be understood as actual. (GW 20, §143, Addition)

The process of *actualization* that drives Hegel's philosophy is conceptually related to Aristotle's notion of the human good, which can be understood as "life actualising the human essence in accordance with its proper excellences" (Wood 1990, 17). Nevertheless, whereas the final aim of the ancient self-actualization nature was human good in the form of happiness (εὐδαιμονία), i.e., the rationality that pervades and organizes individual action's, Hegel ties his ethical stance to a particular arrangement of freedom. Rather than relying on a structure of freedom as the universal capacity to perform particular actions, he sees freedom rather as the detachment from the subject's particular needs and desires in a kind of a deviation from oneself. While the actualization of freedom does not simply befall us, since it requires engagement in the rational practices that shape and determine it, the central moment of actualization, as presented in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, is ultimately the idea of the good, which is "the realised freedom" and as such "the absolute final end and aim of the world (*der absolute Endzweck der Welt*)" (GW 14, §129).

Every action in itself has its own particular finite end, willed by subjects who obtain certain satisfactions from it. All these finite ends are willed by subjects and ideally strive to converge in the demands of the universal end, which is freedom. This is the only path that leads to happiness, but because of their finitude, they come into conflict along the way, where the well-being (or satisfaction) of one subject collides with the well-being of others. And persisting in our own satisfaction to the detriment of others, is tantamount to inviting in evil.[5]

The particular instances of morality, the singular subjective manifestations of morality, free will as such, the contingent world stage and the knowledge of it all, converge in the idea of the good. What drives them to do so? Since the good is "that which is and ought to be" (GW 26,1, §65, 68), and as such is free from evil, without any attachment to particular needs and desires, the good is that which it ought to be, since the world has always already been fundamentally good by virtue of reason. So what is it that propels us into the embrace of the good? You have to will it, but it also has to will you.

> It is only in the subjective will that the good has the mediation through which it enters into actuality (Ilt 4, 348, § 131). It is the necessity to be actual and is actual only through the particular will [...] The *Dasein* of the good thus depends on the particular will; it has no other executors. To this extent the particular will is the accomplisher, the power, the master; on the other hand, the good is its substance and thus the power over the particular will. (ibid., 348-347)

Individuals in their free will can suffer in terms of their well-being or deprivation of property, but these are not facets that concern the good, because they are subordinate to it in every way. Since every action is determined through the will, the knowledge of whether the action is good or evil is also attributable to that will, with some exceptions of course (e.g. children). Hegel illustrates this knowledge of the good with the most self-explanatory example, that of the laws of the state. The same is true of the divine laws, which is why Antigone speaks of God's eternal laws, of which no one knows where they came from: "they are and people obey them" (ibid., 351). Hegel seems to be operating from an exceptionally conservative standpoint, but the goodness of laws, as already mentioned, depends on their actualization. As Hegel puts it: "actuality is mightier than dry understanding and therefore destroys its patchwork (*Lattenwerk*), since it is the concept that lives in the actuality" (GW 26, 1010). For it takes time to change laws and consequently to change what is

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5   Evil consists in "the carrying out of one's own particularity against the determination of the universal" (GW 26,1, §65, 282), against the well-being of others.

good, and all the more so when it comes to revolutions: "The great revolution has happened, the rest is to be left to time, God has time enough, what is to happen will happen" (GW 26, 765).

The ambition of this collection of critical essays and the hope of its contributors is to begin to explore this possibility of reading the idea of the good as it appears in Kant and Hegel as a central concept of classical German philosophy, while at the same time contributing novel perspectives to contemporary philosophical discussions on ethical and political issues. The work moves between Kant and Hegel in order to embrace the radicality with which the former converted the ethical order and the systematicity of the latter, which deprived radicality of its formal sharpness, but in doing so unfolded a world that would one day be good.

The first part of the book examines the structural conditions under which the idea of the good emerges in classical German philosophy. The volume's first chapters, which are committed to a detailed analysis of the inner workings of the idea of the good as presented by Hegel and its relation to morality, address this directly. Armando Manchisi opens the volume with a chapter on the meaning of the concept of "good" in Hegel's philosophy. He makes an important distinction in analysing the idea of the good, separating the idea of the good in *Logic* from that found in the *Philosophy of Right*. This leads him to propose the main thesis that argues that the good in *Logic*, unlike the good in the *Philosophy of Right*, fulfils a structural function, i.e. it is relevant to Hegel's whole system, and not only to his practical philosophy, since it is the condition for ascribing to reality and knowledge a practical nature as well as a teleological-evaluative structure. To support his argument, he introduces a pointed distinction between substantive (freedom of speech is a fundamental good), predicative (this book is good), and attributive (this is a good carriage) uses of the notion of the good and demonstrates that the only attributive feature present in *Logic* provides references to specific objects, without which we would be dealing with empty abstractions. Conversely it contains the good impulse to realise itself and give itself the world and purpose. This account of the birth of the world out of the "realm of darkness", which gives rise to a rational and good reality, is followed in the second chapter, written by Florian Ganzinger, an inquiry into Hegel's confrontation with Kant's aforementioned moral formalism.

Ganzinger points to a discrepancy in the way in which the determination of the good is secured in common readings of Hegel's critique of Kant's moral philosophy, which overly focus on the perceived emptiness, while remaining

blind to Kant's abstention from concrete action, which reflects the tension between acting out of pure duty and acting for a particular, obligatory end. For Hegel, Kant's moral philosophy thus dialectically requires conscience as the form of moral consciousness that is certain about how to determine what the good is. The reason for his critical stance is that moral consciousness in both of its forms (judging and acting) is only capable of determining actions in terms of a purely formal choice between good and evil. The chapter points out that Hegel abolishes this moral purity through reconciliation understood as a mutual relation of confessing and forgiving, in which the good is known negatively by renouncing one's particular conception of what ought to be done in case of moral conflict.

In the third chapter, Goran Vranešević widens the scope of the analysis and follows the arduous task of showing that the will subjects itself in order to justify its own goodness. In the pursuit of the good, however, we don't simply follow a predetermined path. It is an idea, and as such it actually presupposes the world as well as being its ultimate end. That is why there is a drive for the good, which propels the simple individual will to be active and pursue this end. But a simple formal decision of free will is needed to set things in motion in much the same sense as the role of the monarch in a modern state is merely to sign into law that which has already been decided. Yet it is precisely this hollow signature that is crucial for its inscription in the symbolic order. Just as there is no final signature, there is no final end of the good; on the contrary, it is something realised that has no end. The chapter concludes that there is a necessary imagination of the good world to come. It appears as such because it is realised by emptying out the substantiality with which it comes into being, thereby dissolving it and negating even the drive that sustained it.

In the fourth and last chapter of the first part Sebastian Rödl shows us the nature of the natural and the significance of the unnatural good. Rödl develops a sequence of forms in which goodness is thought. The logical form in which "good" first appears is the representation of means (consequentialism). This form is quickly seen to be subordinate to one that represents an end in itself; that is life. The idea of the good as the idea of life is then developed in the forms of inner process, outer process (utilitarianism and Hobbes), and genus process (Anscombe and Thompson). In understanding the good as a genus process, it is thought of as a natural life. However, it will emerge that the goodness thought to exist in practical thought is no natural goodness, and that human life is no natural life but the life. The good, in Rödl's elaboration, is the life of the spirit and as such is *the* life.

The second part of the book turns to the other side of the good in the form of evil. In the fifth chapter, Zdravko Kobe begins with an explanation of morality in Kant. It seems that within the limits of reason alone there is no place for unconditional practical necessity, and that morality is but a word. In Kant's *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, reason and freedom are bound together in a way that morality is nothing but the causality of pure reason and its autonomy. As a consequence, however, Kant was unable to explain the possibility of amoral, let alone evil, deeds. The chapter presents the counter-proposals of Schmid and Reinhold, the solution contained in the completely modified theory that Kant presented in *Religion*, together with the reason for their failures. Based on this, Kobe finally exposes Hegel's positive conception of the evil. For there to be a logical place for the evil, he argues, two elements are needed: the subject must be considered absolute, and there must be an incongruity within the absolute (or reason). The chapter also makes the important point that in Hegel, the evil constitutes the most intimate form of the subject, and irony its most extreme form.

This explication of evil in Hegel is continued in chapter six by Giulia La Rocca. In her chapter, she proposes a reading of the dynamic of inclusion and exclusion through an interpretation of Hegel's figure of the evil conscience. The main point of the chapter is thus to reveal the dialectic underlying the opposition of the good and the evil, according to which the so-called universal good itself turns out to be evil, and therefore must be redetermined. Although the chapter focuses on the dialectical movement between the good in itself and the evil conscience in the philosophy of spirit, she opens with a reconstruction of its logical form in order to understand Hegel's account of evil as thought-determination. Accordingly, the chapter proposes an *excursus* through some of the occurrences of the concept of "evil" in Hegel's *Science of Logic* in order to make clear which logical structure underlies the figure of the evil conscience. Secondly, the chapter deals with this figure in the realm of the spirit. By pushing Hegel's argument further, it tries to draw some consequences concerning the dialectic of good and evil as a dialectic of exclusion and inclusion.

In the last chapter of the second part of the volume, Bojana Jovićević continues with the analysis of the idea of evil in Hegel's philosophy, albeit from the opposite perspective. She argues that evil, far from being a mere privation or absence of the good, has a positive ontological function. Moreover, she demonstrates that it constitutes that which is most peculiar and particular to the individual – and can be grasped as their subjectivity. To support this claim, we she turns to Augustine's theory of sin, through which, similarly to Hegel, the sinful individual

constitutes themselves as individuals. Finally, she delves into a specific chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* on Evil and its Forgiveness, to expound upon the idea of two evil individuals in the nexus of mutual forgiveness.

The last part of the volume presents interpretations that are implicitly rooted in reflections on the good and that highlight the relevance of this idea for our contemporary thought. The eighth chapter attempts to shed new light on Hegel's attitude regarding Kant's ethical thought by focusing on Hegel's sporadic but significant use of the term *Eigensinn*, "obstinacy". To illustrate this, Martin Hergouth establishes the link between ethical thought and obstinacy, and uses two points of encounter between these ideas. First, the fact that Hegel's characterization of the principle of modernity as *Eigensinn*, the unwillingness to accept anything that is not justified through reason, does bear some resemblance to the idea of Kantian autonomy. Secondly, the struggle for recognition, which can be related to the "Kantian paradox" of autonomy (at least according to Terry Pinkard), and ends with the often overlooked figure of the *obstinate bondsman*. From this premise, we attempt to construct a concise image of the relation between the titular notions of autonomy and *Eigensinn*, and hence Kant's and Hegel's ethics.

In chapter nine, Marcus Quent makes an important connection between the abstractness of the idea of the good in classical German philosophy and the contemporary reflection on the total annihilation of the world by the atomic bomb. He points out that when we think about the good, we adopt a perspective of the end. In the present, however, action is no longer regarded as a potential articulation or realization of the good, but rather as a means of preventing an end: an ultimate catastrophe that can no longer be integrated into the perspective of the good. This reveals the problematic character of the relation between the good, the perspective of the end, and the operation of negation in our contemporary world. The chapter examines this relation by focusing on the two event horizons of a nuclear threat and climate change with their different temporalities. Drawing on Maurice Blanchot's intriguing critique of Karl Jasper's book on the atom bomb, the article elaborates how the idea of humanity – as a self-generating whole and an absolute good – is at the heart of this problematic relationship. Finally, the chapter questions the status of the idea of humanity in the discourse on the ecological transformation of our times.

Finally, in the last chapter of the volume, Lena Weyand reflects on the idea of the good by linking it to the contemporary problem of alienation as introduced by Marx. In his early writings, Marx seems to give four different

descriptions of his concept of alienation. In her text, Weyand presents all four and discusses different ways of understanding them. She shows that they can only be understood by reading them all together. Alienation describes a relation between humans that has gone wrong, becoming a poor way of establishing a relationship with others. After explaining how Marx's term alienation is connected to the idea of a human life-form, she finally shows that Marx's term alienation implicitly shows that seeking the good means seeking the good of humans as *Gattungswesen*, as humans living together. Alienation is therefore not only a tool for criticizing living conditions under capitalism, but also a vital way of reflecting on the good.

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Abbreviations

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Part One
The Impetus of the Good

What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Good?

On the Structural Function of the Practical Idea in Hegel's Logic

Armando Manchisi

Introduction

If we take a look at the secondary literature, we could easily get the impression that in Hegel's philosophy the notion of "good" plays a much less crucial and controversial role than concepts such as "spirit", "absolute", or "truth".[1] But this would be misleading. There are two reasons for such confusion.

First, Hegel does not speak of "good" as extensively as he does with other seemingly more "structural" concepts. For example, the notion of "spirit" designates, along with those of "logic" and "nature", one of the basic forms in which the idea manifests itself, that is, the fundamental core of Hegel's system. A different but equally important role is played by the term "absolute", which

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1   As a purely illustrative example, see Vieweg (2023), which collects 23 texts by leading scholars that summarize "the best of Hegel" and yet does not include any contributions on the topic of the good (while many are devoted to the notions of "philosophy", "idealism", "spirit", "knowledge", "concept").

recurs repeatedly in Hegel's philosophy, especially in the attributive form ("absolute idea", "absolute spirit", but also "absolute beginning", "absolute mechanics", and so on). A still different case is the notion of "truth", which serves a central function in the systematic path, as is evident from recurring formulas such as "the *truth* of *being* is *essence*" (GW 11, 241/Hegel 2010a, 337) or "mind is the *truth* of nature" (GW 20, § 381/Hegel 2007, 9), and so on.

The concept of "good" does not seem to have such relevance, since Hegel, in his late system, speaks explicitly of "good" on only two occasions: in the Logic, in the pages on the idea of the good (GW 12, 231-235/Hegel 2010, 729-734; GW 20, §§ 233-235/Hegel 2010b, 297-299); and in the *Philosophy of Right*, in the chapter "The Good and the Conscience" (or "Good and Evil", in the *Encyclopedia* version) in the Morality section (GW 14.1, §§ 129-141/Hegel 1991, 157-186; GW 20, §§ 507-512/Hegel 2007, 225-227).[2] Thus the good does not seem to denote "macrostructures" (as is the case with spirit), nor does it seem to serve a relevant function in the systematic process (Hegel never says that something is "the good of" something else, as he does with the term "truth"). It simply seems to refer to certain objects among others. And this therefore means that, while notions such as "spirit", "absolute", or "truth" must be investigated as much by those dealing with epistemological or ontological issues as by those addressing political, aesthetic, or religious questions, the concept of "good" seems instead to be relevant only to those concerned with a very specific problem in Hegel's practical philosophy (e.g., for those working on his ethics).

The *second* reason that may cause confusion regarding the meaning of the concept of "good" in Hegel's philosophy is due to the remarkable similarity among its occurrences. In both the *Logic* and *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel seems to use the same argumentative structure: to put it very roughly, he first criticizes the identification of the good with an abstract principle that subjectivity must realize; he then shows that the good must be conceived of as something actual and concrete, which in the *Logic* means transitioning to the absolute idea, which is then referred to as the "fulfilled good" (GW 12, 233/Hegel 2010a, 731), and in the *Philosophy of Right* shifting to the domain of the Ethical Life, which is therefore understood as the "living good" (GW 14.1, § 141/Hegel 1991, 189). This similarity has had two main consequences: first, that Hegel's conception of the good has been regarded by many interpreters as uniform and

2   Here and in what follows, I use regular font (Logic, Philosophy of Right, etc.) to refer to specific domains of Hegel's system, while I use italics (*Science of Logic*, *Encyclopedia*, *Elements*, etc.) to refer to the works in which these domains are examined.

one-dimensional, and as concerning, again, a very specific problem to which there is an equally specific solution; and second, that the two accounts of the good in Hegel's system have been regarded as overlapping, with the result that the account in the *Logic*, which is less well known, is frequently made to coincide with that in the much more popular and studied *Philosophy of Right*.

In this chapter, I will try to show that these arguments are actually the result of several misunderstandings. More specifically, I have two main goals: first, I will argue that the idea of the good in the *Logic* is different from the good in the *Philosophy of Right*; and second, I will show that the idea of the good in the *Logic* fulfils a *structural function*, that is, unlike the good in the *Philosophy of Right*, it is relevant to Hegel's overall account of reality and knowledge (and thus not only to issues related to his practical philosophy).

In order to make my case, I will proceed as follows: I will first outline some conceptual distinctions about the term "good" that will be useful for my interpretation; I will present Hegel's theory of the idea and then examine in more detail the chapter on the idea of the good in the Logic, illustrating its structure as well as its limits; in the light of this, I will clarify what I mean when I say that the idea of the good fulfils a "structural function" and what consequences this has for our understanding of Hegel's philosophy in general; in the concluding remarks, I will summarize my argument, thereby answering the question that gives the title to this contribution (inspired by a famous short story by Raymond Carver), namely: for Hegel, what do we talk about when we talk about good?

The Varieties of Goodness

The notion of "good" undoubtedly plays a central role in philosophy and elsewhere. But providing a precise analysis of it, not to mention a comprehensive definition, is a daunting challenge, to say the least. Leaving aside issues of a philological and historical nature, the main philosophical reason for such difficulty can be summed up with Aristotle's words that "good is spoken of in as many ways as being [is spoken of]" (EN I 1096a 23-24). Indeed, depending on the contexts, the term "good" has different functions and meanings. Following the classification of von Wright (1963), who called this phenomenon the "varieties of goodness", we can speak, for example, of *instrumental goodness*, when "good" denotes the suitability of an artefact to fulfil certain purposes (e.g., in the expression "a good hammer"); we can speak of *technical goodness*,

when "good" means "good at", that is, it signifies the fact that an activity is carried out well (e.g., "she is a good chess player"); but the term "good" can also stand for *beneficial* (e.g., in the sentence "fresh air is good"); or we can speak of *hedonic goodness*, which refers to the pleasant feelings that an object can provoke in a subject (as in the expressions "a good perfume", "good weather", or even "a good joke"), and so on.

Faced with such a variety of meanings, uses and contexts, one can easily and legitimately be discouraged from attempting to analyse the notion of "good". Drawing on some suggestions from the metaethical debate, it is possible to bring clarity to this tangle of meanings by starting with a distinction between three possible usages of this term, namely, between substantive, predicative, and attributive usage:

a) in *substantive usage* "good" is taken as a noun, such as in the phrase "freedom of speech is a fundamental good";

b) in *predicative usage* "good" is taken as a predicative adjective, such as in the phrase "this book is good";

c) in *attributive usage* "good" is taken as an attributive adjective, such as in the phrase "this is a good car".

In an influential 1956 article, however, Peter Geach questioned whether "good" can really be used predicatively, since its meaning always seems to depend on the object of reference. The term "green", for example, is fully intelligible regardless of the object it connotes. This is shown by the fact that the proposition

(A) This apple is green

can be split into two different propositions:

(A_1) This is an apple
(A_2) This is green

where (A_1) and (A_2) also make sense separately. But this does not seem to be the case for "good". In fact, if we take the proposition

(B) This apple is good

and we split it into:

(B_1) This is an apple
(B_2) This is good

the meaning of "good" in (B$_2$) becomes completely indeterminate and the proposition no longer makes sense. This is why, according to Geach (1956), the term "good" can only be used attributively: for example, in the proposition "this is a good apple", the meaning of the adjective "good" is determined by its referring to "apple" (and means, for example, "tasty"); in the proposition "this is a good car", the meaning of "good" changes completely (and means, for example, "fast" or "reliable"). In more formal terms, then, the meaning of "good" in propositions such as "*x* is a good A" depends on the meaning of A and is established by the possibility of a given *x* to instantiate properties that define A's being a member of a certain class of entities.[3]

These clarifications are important because – and this is the main thesis I will argue – *Hegel understands the concept of "good" primarily (though not exclusively) in an attributive sense*. More specifically, while in the Philosophy of Right he uses the notion of "good" mostly as a noun, in the Logic he means "good" mainly as an attribute of reality – and the reason for this is similar to Geach's, namely that, *without any reference to specific objects, to speak of "good" is an abstract and empty exercise*. And it is precisely this difference that allows us to understand what I have called the "structural function" of the idea of the good. In order to clarify this point, however, it is necessary to take a closer look at Hegel's theory of the idea.

Hegel's Theory of the Idea

Hegel defines the idea as "*the absolute unity of the concept and objectivity*" (GW 20, § 213/Hegel 2010b, 282). To clarify what this means, it is first important to illustrate the terms involved, so as to avoid possible misunderstandings.[4] Once this is done, it will be possible to examine in more detail the part of the Logic in which Hegel thematizes the idea.

Concept, Objectivity, Idea

The first issue to be made clear is that the term *concept* (*Begriff*), for Hegel, does not indicate a product or instrument of reason, but rationality as such. It represents the domain of meanings, rules and ends, that is, that normative space that makes the world and human existence intelligible and endowed

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3   For more on this see Thomson (2008, ch. 1-2).
4   On Hegel's theory of the idea see Düsing (1984, ch. 5), Nuzzo (1995), Siep (2018).

with meaning. In the words of a contemporary philosopher, it is what ensures that "the world is embraceable in thought" (McDowell 1996, 33).

But the concept is only the subjective side of the idea, which in order to realize itself must also include the other side, namely *objectivity* (*Objektivität*) (GW 12, 29-30/Hegel 2010a, 526-527). The meaning of this term also differs from its usual understanding, whereby it refers neither to external reality, as opposed to and independent from the human mind, nor to a property of our judgments or theories, in the sense that they do not convey subjective opinions. The idea is objective in that it presents itself "as a *totality*, as a *world*" (GW 12, 135/Hegel 2010a, 633) that develops rationally: it is the reality regarded not as an aggregate, but as a unity in which the parts realize themselves by having the whole as their own end, somewhat as in the human body the different organs, fulfilling their specific function, cooperate in the development of the whole organism.

As a *unity* of concept and objectivity, the idea is therefore "the totality's self-determining identity" (GW 12, 172/Hegel 2010a, 669). It is the rationality that organizes the world in its various manifestations, from the most basic forms of the nature (physical, chemical, biological) to the most complex ones of the spirit (as both individual and social life-form and also as knowledge of these manifestations). As a consequence, the term "idea" for Hegel does not mean "the idea *of something*" (GW 20, § 213, R/Hegel 2010b, 283), nor does it refer to an abstract entity that stands in opposition to the empirical world, as in Plato, or the ought-being that opposes being, as in Kant.[5] Rather, for Hegel the idea is the world, both natural and social, as a substance that realizes and knows itself (GW 20, § 237/Hegel 2010b, 299-300). It is thus both ontological and epistemological in scope, or in other words: the idea is the structure that organizes both reality and the knowledge of reality.

The Doctrine of the Idea

Despite its general scope, Hegel presents and develops the notion of "idea" in a specific place in his system, namely the Doctrine of the Idea, which, not surprisingly, is the final section of the Logic.[6] This section is divided into three

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5   For Plato there are "two kinds of beings": that of visible, empirical things and that of invisible, non-empirical things, i.e., ideas (Phd, 79a 6-10). For Kant, on the other hand, ideas have exclusively a regulative function, since they are a mere "*focus imaginarius*" toward which reason must aim (KrV, A 644/B 672).

6   For a comprehensive and detailed analysis of this section cf. Siep (2018).

parts, reflecting different configurations of the relationship of concept and objectivity: Idea of Life, Idea of Cognition and Absolute Idea.

The first configuration is *life*, which is the immediate identity of the two sides of the idea, being the concept that "permeates" the objectivity "as self-directed purpose (*Selbstzweck*)" (GW 12, 177/Hegel 2010a, 675). It therefore expresses the unitary, processual and purposive nature of reality as rational, i.e., that the world is not only intelligible but also oriented to the realization of functions and ends.

The second configuration is the *idea of cognition*, which Hegel defines as "the *relationship of reflection*" of concept and objectivity and thus as "the differentiation of the idea in itself" (GW 20, § 224/Hegel 2010b, 291). Cognition is therefore the "rupture" of the unity of life and the consequent turning of the idea toward itself. This dynamic is therefore broken down into a "*twofold* […] movement" (GW 20, § 225/ Hegel 2010b, 291), represented by the idea of the true, on the one hand, and the idea of the good, on the other. Hegel also calls the idea of the true "the *theoretical* […] activity of the idea" and defines it as "the drive of knowledge to truth" (GW 20, § 225/Hegel 2010b, 291): it is the tension of the concept to know the reality external to it. Correspondingly, the idea of the good, which Hegel also calls "the *practical* activity of the idea", "*willing*", "*action*", is described as "the drive of the *good* to bring itself about" (GW 20, § 225/Hegel 2010b, 291): it is the tension of the subjective concept to realize itself, that is, to shape the objective reality. The recomposing of this internal separation consists in the transition to the absolute idea, namely, to the accomplished unity of the rational and the actual.

As a synthesis of the previous moments, the *absolute idea* is thus "life, having come back to itself from the differentiation and finitude of knowing, and having become identical with the concept through the activity of the concept" (GW 20, § 235/Hegel 2010b, 299). It is, in other words, the reality that is in itself rational, and knows and realizes itself.

If on the one hand we therefore hold firm to the definition of the idea as "*unity of the concept and objectivity*", and on the other hand the definition of the idea of the good as "the *practical* activity of the idea", we can then understand the chapter on the idea of the good in the Logic as dealing with the practical relationship of the concept to objectivity – or more precisely: as a *philosophical analysis of the relationship between practical rationality and reality*.

The Structure of the Idea of the Good in the Logic

I now turn to examine in more detail the idea of the good.[7] The starting point of my analysis is the following quote from Hegel:

> [The idea of the good] is the *impulse* [of the concept] to realize itself, the purpose that *on its own* wants to give itself objectivity in the objective world and realize itself. (GW 12, 231/Hegel 2010a, 729)

This is certainly a rich and complex sentence. I will focus on two main aspects of the idea of the good that are emphasized here, namely:

  a) the active and rational nature of the concept;
  b) its teleological structure.

The first aspect is summarized by the characterization of the idea of the good as the "*impulse* [of the concept] to realize itself". The second by Hegel's emphasis on the purpose-oriented nature of this realization.

The Concept as "Impulse to Realize Itself"

The main picture outlined by the sentence quoted above is that the idea of the good consists of the attempt of the subjective concept to actualize itself and thereby determine "the world that it finds" (GW 20, § 233/Hegel 2010b, 297). This is summed up by the term "impulse" (*Trieb*),[8] which makes it possible to clarify the three main premises of the idea of the good:

  a) the separation between subjective concept and objective reality;
  b) the drive to overcome this separation;
  c) the valuation of the concept and the devaluation of reality.

Being a moment of the idea of cognition, the idea of the good is also marked internally by the opposition between concept and objectivity, that is, between the two sides of the idea. At the same time, however, it also consists of the concept's attempt to *sublate* this separation and thereby achieve the unity of the absolute idea. But while the idea of the true pursues this goal by "erasing" the concept in the passive reception of objective reality, the idea of the good proceeds in exactly the opposite way – that is, by shaping reality

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7　　On the idea of the good in the Logic cf. Hogemann (1994), Siep (2010), Manchisi (2019, 2021), Deligiorgi (2022).

8　　On the meaning of this term in Hegel's Logic see Wittmann (2006).

through the subjective activity of the concept. The reason for this structure reversal with respect to the idea of the true is that, in the idea of the good, it is the concept that is the "driving force", so to speak, that is, what brings forth the self-realization of reason, while reality is understood as a neutral, shapeless space.

This conception is effectively summarized by Hegel through the picture of an opposition between two realms:

> one a realm of subjectivity in the pure spaces of transparent thought, the other a realm of objectivity in the element of an externally manifold reality, an impervious realm of darkness. (GW 12, 233/Hegel 2010a, 731)

In this picture, objective reality is a "realm of darkness", that is, a murky, fragmented space in which it is impossible to orient oneself. It is therefore the task of the subjective concept to shed light, bringing unity and rationality. The notion of "reality (*Wirklichkeit*)", accordingly, is here meant by Hegel in negative terms, namely, as that which opposes subjectivity and limits it from the outside. As a consequence, if the concept is the space of rationality, reality is non-rational (and it is therefore the task of the concept to bring reason into it); if the concept is the source of good, reality is "rather either the evil or the indifferent, the merely determinable, whose worth does not lie within it" (GW 12, 234/Hegel 2010a, 732).

The account of rationality underlying the idea of the good in the Logic, then, is that of an active power that shapes reality, making it rational. As an "*impulse to realize itself*", the concept must bring rules, ends and meanings into the objective world, which in itself has no evaluative or normative scope.

The Concept as "Purpose"

I now consider the second aspect of the idea of the good. As seen in the above quote, Hegel explains the drive of the concept by referring to its teleological structure: rationality strives to realize itself as a "purpose (*Zweck*) that […] wants to give itself objectivity" (GW 12, 231/ Hegel 2010a, 729). This means that this realization is not "blind", but is guided by a purpose. Such a purpose has a peculiar status: on the one side, it is found in objective reality, so that its pursuit involves a tension of the concept toward something external to itself; but on the other, it is posited by the concept itself, which by realizing it therefore only fulfils its own rationality.

In order to clarify this point, it is important to briefly address a question of an interpretive nature. The explanatory account underlying the teleological structure of the idea of the good seems to be what Hegel calls "*external purposiveness*" (GW 12, 156/Hegel 2010a, 653), and which in the Teleology section in the *Logic* he identifies as lacking in that it is based on the opposition of subject and object. This opposition is removed in the transition to the idea of life, in which the concept no longer has its own end outside itself, but is itself such an end.[9]

The problem that arises with the idea of the good is thus the reappearance of a teleological account that has already been overcome. Hegel himself mentions the problem, but immediately points out that, compared to the Teleology section, here "the content constitutes the difference" (GW 12, 232/Hegel 2010a, 730). On the one hand, in fact, the idea of the good does represent a "step backward" from the idea of life: as a moment of the idea of cognition, it contains that "opposition [of] the one-sidedness of subjectivity together with the one-sidedness of objectivity" (GW 20, § 225/Hegel 2010b, 291) that is the condition of possibility of external purposiveness, and that life had sublated. On the other hand, however, this opposition is nothing more than the "pure differentiating [of the idea] *within* itself" (GW 20, § 224/Hegel 2010b, 291): the separation of concept and reality remains internal to the unity of the idea.

In light of this, it is then possible to say that the purposiveness of the idea of the good is *external and internal at the same time*: it is external insofar as it is a relation between two opposites, but it is internal insofar as these opposites are but "sides" of *one* logical-speculative determination.

The Limits of the Idea of the Good

The source of these fluctuations and ambiguities in the idea of the good lies in its core premise, namely, the separation between concept and reality. This is what dooms this philosophical account to failure and calls for its overcoming. In particular, there are two main negative consequences to which the idea of the good leads: *self-referentiality* and *ineffectiveness*.[10]

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9   On these topics see Kreines (2015, ch. 3). See also what Goran Vranešević writes in this volume: "The final end does not end the work of the concept, since it is not an end (*Ende*) and ends are a matter of nature, which is its own end without the need to establish a relation to will or sense. The final end is, on the contrary, something realised that has no end" (2024, 78).

10   On the limits (or "aporias") of the idea of the good see Menegoni (1988), and more extensively Manchisi (2019).

Self-Referentiality

The idea of the good is self-referential insofar as the concept is understood as practical rationality, and thus as normative source, in contrast to reality, which is instead regarded as a neutral, value-free space. As I have already mentioned, the concept has an active and reflexive nature: for example, Hegel writes that, in the idea of the good, it "is now *for itself* determined in and for itself", (GW 12, 230/Hegel 2010a, 729) or that "the concept […] is its own subject matter" (GW 12, 231/Hegel 2010a, 729). Being the subjective side of the idea, the concept is able to reflect on its own contents and determine them, that is, give them objective form and value. With respect to this activity of self-determination, reality plays no role: it is an inert material that exerts no normative constraint. This leads Hegel to conclude that:

> the certainty of itself that the subject possesses in being determined in and for itself is a certainty of its reality and of the *non-reality* of the world. (GW 12, 231/Hegel 2010a, 729)

The only reality that matters is that which the subject acknowledges its own contents: since they are the result of its self-determination, they are rationally justified. These contents are therefore also the only reality of which it is possible to have "certainty", since it is the subject itself that has produced it. In contrast, with regard to the "world" – which possesses no value or rationality in itself – it is not possible to establish anything relevant, so from the normative point of view of the concept we can only claim its "*non-reality*", that is, its utter insignificance. The idea of the good is thus self-referential insofar as its subjective side is completely locked on itself and does not acknowledge any value or meaning outside of itself.

Ineffectiveness

This self-referentiality of reason is also the cause of its ineffectiveness, i.e., its inability to actually determine the external world. The assumption that the only source of norms and values is the subject makes the process of realization of the good consist in a "transition" from the ideal and rational space of the concept to the real and indeterminate space of the world. It is thus a kind of "projection" from inwardness to outwardness. Hegel sums up this point as follows:

> The realized good is good by virtue of what it already is in the subjective purpose, in its idea; the realization gives it an external existence, but since this existence has only the status of an externality which is in and for itself

> null, what is good in it has attained only an accidental, fragile existence, not
> a realization corresponding to the idea. (GW 12, 232/Hegel 2010a, 731)

Hegel's critique, then, is that given his starting assumption, namely the de-
valuation of external reality, the realization of the good does not consist in a
true unity between concept and objectivity, but in an imitation of it. To the
extent to which it is viewed as a mere expanse of neutral facts, i.e., having no
normative meaning or scope, the world turns out to be impermeable to prac-
tical rationality, since everything the latter produces loses its value the very
moment it "enters" external reality. What is achieved, in other words, is merely
a fragmented ("accidental, fragile") good, since it no longer has anything of its
original value.

This is why Hegel claims that "the idea of the fulfilled good is indeed an
absolute postulate, but no more than a postulate" (GW 12, 233/Hegel 2010a,
731). To speak of an "*absolute postulate*" means this: the concept produces
an ideal, rational good, which nevertheless does not affect reality ("*absolute*"
here means, in a literal sense, "unbound" from external constraints). But to
conceive the good apart from the conditions of its realization, that is, the
possibility of its being effective for concrete action and evaluation, is to give
up a fundamental aspect of the very notion of "good". Practical rationality
outlined in this way is thus a normative demand without a connection to re-
ality, and what results are contents that merely "float" over the world without
actually changing it, that is, principles and values that exercise no power over
concrete subjects or contexts.

The picture of the good provided here is thus that of an architecture that is
perfectly designed but cannot be materially built. The practical idea, which at
first was the "the *impulse* to realize itself", ultimately proves to be the struc-
tural impossibility of realization.

The Attributive Meaning of the Good

The Transition to the Absolute Idea

The recognition that the idea of the good is bound to contradiction by its very
structure implies a final, fundamental step in the Logic, namely, the transition
to the absolute idea. This step has a threefold significance (at least for the is-
sues I am dealing with in this contribution):

a) it is the "turning back to *life*" (GW 12, 236/Hegel 2010a, 735), i.e., the reinstatement of internal activity and purposiveness;

b) it is the overcoming of the one-sidedness of the idea of cognition and thereby the unification of the subjective concept and objective reality;

c) it is "the *truth* of the good" (GW 20, § 235/Hegel 2010b, 299), i.e., the good finally realized.

Hegel summarizes these points as follows:

> the previously discovered reality is at the same time determined as the realized absolute purpose, no longer […] [as] a merely objective world without the subjectivity of the concept, but as an objective world whose inner ground and actual subsistence is rather the concept. This is the absolute idea. (GW 12, 235/Hegel 2010a, 734)

In the account that Hegel outlines in the final step of the Logic, then, reality is no longer an empty space that subjectivity must shape according to its own ends, but a "world" that, having the concept as its "inner ground and actual subsistence", is intrinsically rational and good.

The Attributive Meaning of "Good" in the Logic

To clarify this last statement, the conceptual distinctions we saw above about the different usages of "good" are relevant again. But a clarification is first necessary: here I mean these distinctions not linguistically but philosophically. To put it another way, I am interested in illuminating the theoretical function that the *concept* (not merely the term) "good" has within Hegel's philosophy.

In order to understand what it means that the world is good in its "inner ground and actual subsistence", or that it is the realized good, it is necessary to hold together all three components of the transition to the absolute idea indicated above: the "turning back to *life*", the unification of concept and reality, and the fulfilment of the "*impulse* to realize itself" of the practical idea. On this basis, we can summarize Hegel's account of the good in the Logic by pointing to two central features of the absolute idea, namely: (a) *rationality* and (b) *purposiveness*.

a) To speak of "realized good" means, first of all, that *reality is value-laden* and can therefore be conceived according to value criteria, that is, it can be understood as better or worse, desirable or repulsive, worthy or unworthy, and so on. And this is to say, as a consequence, that we can use "good" *in an attributive sense*: it is only because of the analysis of the idea of the good and its

realization that it is possible to speak, in the context of Hegel's philosophy, of a "good action" or a "good State", but also of a "good oak", a "good body", or a "good poem". The good, as conceived in the Logic in the transition to the absolute idea, constitutes a property of reality and of everything within it, insofar as rationality is manifested in it to some degree. This is explained clearly by Hegel himself:

> In the concrete things, together with the diversity of the properties among themselves, there also enters the difference between the *concept* and its *realization*. The concept has an external presentation in nature and spirit wherein its determinateness manifests itself as dependence on the external, as transitoriness and inadequacy. Therefore, although an actual thing will indeed manifest in itself what it *ought* to be, yet, in accordance with the negative judgment of the concept, it may equally also show that its actuality only imperfectly corresponds with this concept, that it is *bad*. Now the definition is supposed to indicate the determinateness of the concept in an immediate property; yet there is no property against which an instance could not be adduced where the whole *habitus* indeed allows the recognition of the concrete thing to be defined, yet the property taken for its character shows itself to be immature and stunted. In a bad plant, a bad animal type, a contemptible human individual, a bad State, there are aspects of their concrete existence that are defective or entirely missing but that might otherwise be picked out for the definition as the distinctive mark and essential determinateness in the existence of any such concrete entity. (GW 12, 213-214/Hegel 2010a, 712)

This quote thus summarizes the normative and evaluative role of the concept in the realization of both natural and spiritual things, and thereby explains why I referred to the *structural function of the good*. Like notions such as "absolute", "spirit", or "truth", the notion of "good", as outlined in the Logic, also plays a role that does not terminate with its direct thematization (i.e., in the chapter on the idea of the good), but has repercussions for Hegel's *whole* system. In this case, it is only by considering the good as an essential feature of the absolute idea, i.e., of the principle that organizes the whole of reality and knowledge, that it is possible to evaluate particular entities and thus to speak of a "good plant" or a "good State" (or, as Hegel seems to prefer, a "bad plant" or a "bad State").

b) There is a second meaning that is related to the attributive usage of the concept of "good" in Hegel's philosophy. It has to do with the definitions of the idea of the good as "*practical* activity of the idea", "action", and "impulse to realize itself", as well as with the "turning back to *life*" in the absolute idea. In this respect, the last step of the Logic allows Hegel to conceive of reality not

only as value-laden, but also as *a teleologically oriented process*.[11] This has two main implications: one ontological, the other epistemological.

The first is that, in Hegel's account, the world both natural and spiritual is not something static and merely given, but is essentially dynamic. This does not just mean that things change over time. To say that the world is "practical", for Hegel, means that reality is a process oriented purposively toward the realization of reason. This process is also evaluative in nature, so the more an entity or relation realizes its rational potential (i.e., its concept), the more good it is, meaning that it is a good representative of its kind.

The second implication is that for Hegel philosophy is not (at least not primarily) concerned with static "things" but with events or processes, which can be adequately described only when grasped within the dynamic in which they occur and that cannot be reduced to other entities, such as states of affairs. Moreover, this makes the philosophical enterprise constitutively evaluative, since knowing something philosophically means knowing its concept and determining to what extent it is fulfilled, i.e., formulating statements such as "*x* is a good A" or "*x* is not a good A".

The transition to the absolute idea, as the realization of the practical idea and turning back to life, thereby sets the possibility for Hegel to accord teleological-evaluative nature to both being and knowledge.[12]

The Non-Attributive Meaning of "Good" in the Philosophy of Right

These explanations should finally have also clarified the difference between the good in the Logic and the good in the Philosophy of Right. In the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel describes morality as the "opposition" (GW 14.1, § 109/ Hegel 1991, 138) between the authority of abstract norms and values and the reflective activity of the moral subject. Central to this analysis, then, is the attempt to build a relationship between these two extremes, so that the normative space constitutes the ground of subjective agency. The good examined here is thus an abstract moral principle that finite consciousness tries to pursue. In the same way, Hegel defines the living good in the section on Ethical Life as "the *concept of freedom which has become the existing*

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11 On the importance of the notion of "life" for understanding the processual and purposive character of Hegel's philosophy cf. Illetterati (2019) and Ng (2020).

12 On the practical nature of reality in Hegel see Quante (2018b). On the teleological-evaluative (and essentialist) structure of Hegel's philosophy cf. Quante (2018a, ch. 1).

world and the nature of self-consciousness" (GW 14.1, § 142/ Hegel 1991, 189):
that is, it is the set of norms, practices and institutions through which human
beings organize the social and political reality they participate in and in which
they recognize themselves.[13]

As we have seen, things are different in the Logic. The idea of the good does
not address the problem of normativity from the point of view of the finite
individual, nor does it concern particular instantiations of the good. As a
speculative analysis, the chapter on the idea of the good in the Logic is also
not directly ethical or political in scope, as is the case with the Philosophy of
Right. It concerns – as I have tried to show – the conditions for the realization
of practical rationality, as much in the realm of spirit as in one of nature.

This difference is captured, again, by the different function of the concept of
"good" in the two contexts. In the Philosophy of Right, Hegel uses this con-
cept with a primarily substantive meaning, that is, to qualify certain objects,
principles, or settings as "goods". In this view, the family is a good, education
is a good, the State is a good, and there is also of course *the* good, meaning
the abstract principle of morality, or *the* living good, meaning the *Sittlichkeit*.

Of course, in the Logic, too, Hegel understands the good as a noun. After
all, he speaks of "idea of *the* good", "realization of *the* good", and so on. But
the central task of the chapter on the idea of the good is to set the conditions
for the attributive usage of this concept. This attributive usage, on the other
hand, is absent from the Philosophy of Right, in which, moreover, it would
not make much sense, since the good there refers either to an abstract moral
principle, which therefore does not determine anything good apart from itself,
or, in the case of the living good, to a specific dimension, namely social and
political reality. As such, a limited (or regional) attributive usage of the good
with respect to the domain of ethical life could be admitted. However, there is
no need to introduce this assumption, since the possibility of considering the
practices and institutions of the *Sittlichkeit* as valuable is already established by
the absolute idea as the general principle of Hegel's system and realized good.

Final Remarks

The problem I have addressed in this paper is the meaning of the good in He-
gel's philosophy. For this purpose, I have provided an interpretation of the idea

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13   On the good in the Philosophy of Right see Moyar (2021).

of the good and the transition to the absolute idea in the Logic. The reason for this choice is – as I have tried to show – that there Hegel does not analyse the good as a moral or political principle, but as a constitutive attribute of reality as rational.

As a result, the idea of the good in the Logic can be understood as Hegel's attempt to answer the question: *what do we talk about when we talk about good?* And this means: what do we mean by the concept of "good" in our judgments, in our descriptions of reality and in our practices? And on the basis of what, as a consequence, can we say that something is "*a* good" or, as is more often the case, that something is "good" or is a "good specimen" of its kind (a good jacket, a good theory, a good friend)?

The thesis I have tried to argue is that in the Logic Hegel provides a possible explanation of this phenomenon, according to which:

a) the good is an essential property of the world, both natural and spiritual;
b) it is only because of this property that we can have value experiences and make value judgments;
c) these judgments can be more or less correct according to their ability to grasp properly the degree of development of what we evaluate.

What do we talk about, then, when we talk about good? Not simply of a moral principle, nor of the end that should guide political life, but of the fact that – to use Hilary Putnam's words – "experience *isn't* 'neutral', […] it comes to us screaming with values" (Putnam 2002, 103). One of the main tasks of philosophy for Hegel is to listen carefully to these screams.[14]

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Abbreviations

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GW 11   Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1978: *Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 11, Wissenschaft der Logik. Erster Band. Die objektive Logik (1812/13)*

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CHAPTER TWO

Moral Law, Conscience and Reconciliation
Hegel on the Formalism of Morality

Florian Ganzinger

Introduction

Hegel famously claims that Kant's moral philosophy is formalistic. But it is a matter of controversy as to whether Hegel's charge presents a serious obstacle to vindicate Kantian ethics.[1] To evaluate the strength of Hegel's argument requires us to understand what its main target is. Hegel's formalism charge has three targets: its first target is the *emptiness* of Kant's moral law because it cannot account for particular, positive duties or determinations of the good.[2] The second target is Kant's moral *rigorism* since for Kant to act morally is to act only from duty as such and not from a particular

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1 Cf. Iwasa (2013), Hahn (2011), Pippin (1991, 108ff.), Wood (1989) and Wood (1990). Cf. Korsgaard (1996b) for defending Kant against "Hegelian objections".

2 By "positive duties" I mean a specific end or purpose, i.e. what I want to do, which is also a duty, i.e. what ought to be done. The expression "determination of the good" is already to be understood in light of Hegel's own take on the idea of the good as the idea of how to act well where to act well can be conceived of first, to do what is right to do, i.e. to act in such a way that recognizes others as persons or as having a free will, and second, to do what is pleasurable/desirable to do, i.e. to act in such a way that promotes the happiness or well-being of others and/or oneself.

purpose.[3] The third target is Kant's moral *subjectivism* since he cannot answer the question of how to objectively determine on which particular duty one ought to act.

Most interpreters tend to take Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and its account of ethical life as his most adequate solution to all three problems.[4] Instead, I will focus in this paper on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* enriched by his early theological writings in order to reconstruct Hegel's conception of reconciliation as his more neglected alternative answer to moral formalism.[5] Contrary to the standard interpretation, I will argue that Hegel's account of forgiveness and reconciliation is not only directed against moral rigorism, but also resolves the more general problem of how to objectively determine what ought to be done, and that Hegel's main target is thus moral subjectivism.[6]

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3   Wood (1990, 151-161) claims that the emptiness charge is unsuccessful, but Wood (1989) and Wood (1990, 167-72) argue that Hegel's rigorism objection presents a serious obstacle to Kant's ethics. Pippin (1991, 113-122) seems to distinguish between weak and strong readings of the emptiness and rigorism charge, and regards only the weak readings as justified. Cf. also Moyar (2011, Chap. 2, cf. especially 45-46, 63), and Ostritsch (2022, 180-183) for a discussion of the rigorism charge. Cf. in particular Moyar (2011, Chap. 5) for Hegel's critique of moral subjectivism.

4   Pippin (1991, 122-124), Pippin (2008, Chap. 7, 8, and 9), and Moyar (2011) present Hegel's concept of ethical life as his solution to all three problems of morality. While Hahn (2011, 152-153) seems to claim that Hegel's concept of ethical life simply presupposes practices or norms as given, Pippin (2008, Chap. 9) interprets mutual recognition as the principle for justifying the rationality of social intuitions (cf. 237, 241-242). In a similar vein, Moyar (2011) argues in Chap. 5 that mutual recognition, although not understood as a direct process but rather as an indirect relation, serves to justify the value of social practices and intuitions. Moyar understands this indirect recognition in terms of his "Complex Reasons Identity Condition" (CRIC) which states that "[i]n ethical action, an agent's motivating reasons stem from purposes that can be nested within broader purposes that provide the justifying reasons for the action" (74); and this nesting work is said to be *subjective* if performed by the agent herself and *objective* if done by other agents passing judgement on actions (75).

5   Cf. also Kobe (2024) in this volume for a different reading of Hegel's formalism charge against Kant which focuses on Kant's inability to account for the possibility of evil.

6   Cf. Brandom (2019, 550-592), Moyar (2011, 164-166), Ostritsch (2022, 180-183), Speight (2005, 305-308) for readings of forgiveness or reconciliation as primarily answering to rigoristic moral assessment. In particular, I take it that Brandom's naturalistic assessment of the agent's action is a version of rigorism since it construes the intention of the action in terms of sensual motives rather than moral reasons. Wood (1989, 468-477) also reads Hegel as mainly criticizing moral rigorism. Moyar (2011, 163-172) argues that ethical life as an indirect relation of recognition rather than confession and forgiveness, as a direct relation of recognition can solve the moral subjectivism of conscience by nesting one's standing purposes in a system of objective purposes.

My argument will proceed as follows: first, I will show how Hegel's three targets are not to be evaluated in isolation but rather as a progressive explication of the formality which besets moral consciousness. I will claim that Hegel charges not so much Kant's formula of universal law as empty, but rather his *contradiction in the conception test* as a specific way in which Kant's formula of the categorical imperative can serve as a procedure how to test whether a maxim is universalizable. Hegel objects that this test procedure in fact presupposes that a purpose is already given as morally good. Consequently, Hegel's further developed formalism charge must be directed against Kant's construal of the *contradiction in the will test* because this test procedure must involve *obligatory* purposes. This points to the question of whether pure reason itself can determine particular, obligatory ends.

Second, I will sketch why Hegel's idea of the abstract good in the *Philosophy of Right* can be seen as capturing the essential features of Kant's account of particular, both negative and positive, duties in order to discuss the problem of objective determination which Kant's moral philosophy is facing. Hegel's main target will thus turn out to be the tension between Kant's claim that an action is only morally good if it is done for the sake of duty and not for any particular end, which constitutes the content of the maxim, and his claim that there are particular duties or obligatory ends. Accordingly, Hegel's charge concerns not merely rigorism construed as the tension between *duty* and *desire*, but also moral subjectivism understood as the tension between *duty as such* and *particular, obligatory ends*. Since Kant's contradiction in the will test cannot provide the subject with an objective determination of the good, its dialectical consequence is conscience which is understood by Hegel as the form of moral deliberation in which the subject itself determines what ought to be done.

Third, I shall analyse Hegel's account of conscience in the *Phenomenology* in order to show that conscience fails to solve the problem of determination. For Hegel, the conflict between the so-called acting and judging consciousness makes manifest the skeptical insight that in 'hard cases' one knows neither how to be able to act morally well, nor how to be able to judge others morally correct.[7] But this sceptical thrust of Hegel's argument against morality is not meant to be a plea for the ironic stance of anything goes, but instead for his conception of reconciliation, since in reconciliation each subject recognizes to be morally justified by others in renouncing its own conviction to be morally good. Reconciliation is Hegel's answer as to how to resolve genuine normative

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7   Cf. McDowell (1979, 340) for my use of the expression 'hard case'.

conflicts not by resorting to an abstract, universal law as ultimate arbiter, but to the mutual relation of confessing and forgiving which manifests the form of *concrete* universality.

Law-Testing Reason and the Emptiness of Kant's Contradiction in the Conception Test

To begin with, I will seek to locate the target of Hegel's formalism charge against Kant's moral philosophy. I will argue that in the *Phenomenology* Hegel's critique targets the formula of universal law because he interprets it in terms of the *contradiction in the conception test*. From this discussion, it will transpire that the unfolded formalism charge concerns the *contradiction in the will test* because it contains a tension between Kant's insistence on acting from duty for the sake of duty, and the requirement to act on a particular, obligatory end.

In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* Kant introduces the categorical imperative in terms of the *formula of universal law*: "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (AA 4, 421). Kant argues that this formulation of the categorical imperative functions as a procedure to test whether a maxim qualifies as morally permissible, impermissible or obligatory. He distinguishes between the *contradiction in the conception test* and the *contradiction in the will test*: according to the former, to test whether a maxim is permissible or impermissible, we must see whether the maxim in question *can be thought of* as a universal law *without contradicting the maxim itself*. According to the latter, to test whether a maxim is obligatory or not we must ask whether it *can be willed* as a universal law *without contradicting the will itself* (cf. AA 4, 424). In terms of these two test procedures, Kant distinguishes between narrow (strict) and wide duties, which in turn roughly map onto the division between duties of right and duties of virtue.

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's choice of the title "Reason as Testing Laws" already seems to suggest that he is criticizing the formula of universal law as a *test procedure* in that section. The result of the preceding section "Reason as Lawgiver" has been that the universal law of practical reason cannot conform to its particular laws if there is no account of how the universal law determines itself. The particular laws like "love thy neighbour as thyself" must be contingent with respect to the universal law of reason. Hence, the practical reason

can only be "a standard for deciding whether a content is capable of being a law or not, i.e. whether it is or is not self-contradictory" (PhS, §428, 256). On the face of it, Hegel's account of the formula of universal law in terms of the non-contradictoriness of a content seems to be guilty of a gross misinterpretation, since it appears to mislocate the logical contradiction: Hegel claims that all the formula does is to demand that a maxim or principle is not self-contradictory. However, the contradiction is clearly between a *maxim* and its *universalization*.[8]

Yet, this would be too hasty: first, looking at the examples Hegel gives for contents or particular laws in the previous section – "everyone ought to speak the truth" and "love thy neighbour as thyself" – it seems that these imperatives are generated from *maxims of purpose* which have the logical form "I will achieve purpose *P*" rather than from *maxims of action* which have the logical form "I will do action *A* in order to achieve purpose *P*".[9] Second, Hegel casually remarks that non-property is contradictory if it is connected with the representation of an object "as a *necessary object of a need*" (PhS, §430, 258). The basic idea seems to be that once the principle has the hypothetical form of a maxim of action, connecting means and ends, the means can thwart the end. The maxim in question could be formulated as "everyone can take any object in possession in order to satisfy her needs". Now, Hegel argues as follows:

> But to provide for the need in such a completely arbitrary way is contradictory to the nature of the conscious individual who alone is under discussion. For such an individual must think of his need in the form of *universality*, must provide for the whole of his existence, and acquire a lasting possession. This being so, the idea of a thing being arbitrarily allotted to the first self-conscious individual who comes long and needs it, does not accord with itself. (PhS, §430, 258)

Here Hegel's reasoning seems to run along similar lines as Korsgaard's interpretation of the contradiction in the conception test as a practical contradiction.[10] For, Hegel is saying that if there is no property at all, which means that everyone can take possession of anything, one's needs cannot be satisfied in their universality because their satisfaction could be merely contingent and

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8   Cf. Korsgaard (1996b, 86).

9   Cf. Korsgaard (1996a, 57-58) for the distinction between maxims of action and maxims of purpose.

10   Cf. Korsgaard (1996b, 92-95); cf. for a different reading Moyar (2011, 121-122), who claims that the problem with the categorical imperative test is that it presupposes a "value-ordering" in order to give a result.

momentary. Construing non-property as a maxim of action, the means – here taking anything in possession – can thwart the end of satisfying one's needs.

Hence, we should give a more charitable interpretation of Hegel's less polemic reading of Kant's formula of universal law.[11] Ultimately, Hegel is not saying that the formula of universal law cannot rule out some actions as wrong or impermissible.[12] Instead, he insists that the contradiction in the conception test has a very limited scope of application precisely because this procedure is indifferent with respect to the *end* which figures as *content* of the practical principle. This is why Hegel discusses the categorical imperative as a test procedure with respect to maxims of purposes which appears to be odd at first. His point is that what one ought to do can never be *duty as such* but must be a *particular duty* which cannot consist in the mere *pure form* of practical reason but must also have a *pure content* which is why it must represent an obligatory end. Without having an account of how to determine obligatory ends, it is not possible to give an account of positive duties.

Yet Kant is well aware of the fact, that contrary to negative duties, *positive duties* can only be determined with respect to *obligatory ends*.[13] Kant's contradiction in the will test relies on such objectively necessary ends because it says that if universalized, a maxim cannot be willed without contradicting an obligatory end of the will which is not contained in the maxim itself. In the *Doctrine of Virtues*, Kant introduces *self-perfection* and the *happiness of others* as the two types of obligatory ends (AA 6, 385).[14] It can be argued that while the formula of universal law cannot account for arriving at these obligatory ends, the other formulas of the categorical imperative, especially the *formula of humanity*, "act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (AA 4, 429), can be considered as the source of these pure ends.[15]

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11   Cf. Moyar (2011, 121-122) for Hegel's argument that property is as much contradictory as non-property. Moyar goes on to argue (123) that Hegel is proposing the objective form of CRIC as a solution to the formalism charge voiced in the section "Reason as Testing Laws". On the contrary, Wood (1990, 154-161) maintains that Hegel has simply failed to understand Kant's universal law test and his criticism does not succeed.

12   Cf. Pippin (1991, 109) and Pippin (2008, 69, footnote 4) for the interpretive option of seeing Hegel as arguing for a limited validity of the moral law.

13   Cf. Pippin (1991, 113-122) for this Kantian rejoinder, which emphasizes how in his moral philosophy, obligatory ends provide pure contents to the pure form of moral law.

14   Cf. Pippin (1991, 120).

15   Cf. Korsgaard (1996c).

In the following section, I will thus discuss how Hegel criticizes Kant's account of virtues for being unable to give a *unified* account of obligatory ends and his contradiction in the will test for being unable to provide a procedure to determine how to act well. To do so, I shall briefly sketch how Hegel himself arrives at the idea of the good and its determinations in the *Philosophy of Right*: right and happiness or well-being. While I take it that this account is already implicit in Hegel's discussion of morality in the *Phenomenology*, it is much more clearly treated in the *Philosophy of Right*. Subsequently, I will employ this idea of the good in order to shed light on Hegel's critique of moral conscience in the *Phenomenology*. I will argue that for Hegel by being unable to objectively determine what is good, and thus to act well, we come to understand that normative problems cannot be resolved morally but only by reconciliation in which each subject recognizes the other as an individual or whole person.

Hegel's Idea of the Good and the Subjectivism of Kant's Contradiction in the Will Test

In the *Philosophy of Right*, the sphere of abstract right and the sphere of morality serve the aim of deriving the two determinations of the idea of the good which roughly correspond to Kant's duty of right to respect other persons and his duty of virtue to care for the happiness of others.

Hegel simply begins this treatment of abstract right with the legal imperative or duty of right "*be a person and respect others as persons*" (PR, §36). So for Hegel, just as for Kant, I act in accordance with the principle of abstract right if my external actions and thus my exercise of freedom of choice is compatible with the freedom of choice of all others. For, Kant's principle of right states that "[a]ny action is right if it can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law" (AA 6, 230). While Kant justifies his principle of right in terms of the categorical imperative, Hegel justifies his principle of right through his concept of free will and mutual recognition.[16] First, according to Hegel, the will is nothing other than the freedom of choice which is the capacity to determine one's action (*Handlung*) through itself by being the capacity to abstract from any particular end and thus to negate any particular desire or inclination (cf. PR,

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16   Cf. PR, §29: "*Right* is any existence (*Dasein*) in general which is the *existence* of the *free will*".

§5-7).[17] Second, since for others my actions (*Handlungen*) are given objective events (*Taten*), they cannot be an actualization of my freedom without being recognized by the other as free. But this recognition of my action as free would be no recognition *for me* if I were not to recognize the other as a free person at the same time.[18] The other, conceived as a mere force, cannot recognize my own freedom, i.e. freedom can only be recognized through itself. Only in recognizing the other agent as a free person do I know myself to be a free person.[19] Therefore, Hegel's duty of right just is the duty to mutually recognize each other as persons and thus as having a free will.

But this duty of right is only a part of what it means to act well. The concept of abstract right abstracts from the particular ends for the sake of which an action is performed. But since an action must have a *concrete content* or *particular end* it aims to achieve, there is also "the *right* of the *subject* to find its *satisfaction* in the action" (PR, §121, cf. §124). The particular side of an action's universal form, which can be given by general action-descriptions, is its particular interest or value for me. Ultimately, my interests and desires are subsumed under the universal end of happiness or well-being (*Wohl*) as the rational system of my desires.

Now, in the case of extreme, life-threatening danger, the abstract right is limited by the so-called *right of necessity*, i.e. the right to violate what is right, e.g. someone else's property rights, in order to preserve my life (cf. PR, §127). This reveals that the life of any subject as the totality of its particular ends also has a right to count as what is good. Therefore, Hegel introduces the abstract idea of the good as the unity of abstract right or the universal will and the well-being or the particular will. The abstract right is not the good without well-being as manifest in *the right of necessity* (*Notrecht*) but the well-being is not the good either without the abstract right as manifest in *the wrong* (*Unrecht*) (cf. PR, §130).

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17   The free will (cf. PR, §5-7) is not only the *negative* freedom or *freedom of choice* in the sense of the *abstract*, universal will which can step back from any particular purpose or inclination, but also the *positive* freedom in the sense of the *concrete*, singular, self-determined will which is determinate without thereby being determined from without.

18   Cf. Pippin (2008, 198): "[B]eing a free rational agent consists in being recognized as one, and one can only be so recognized if the other's recognition is freely given; and this effectively means only if I recognize the other as a free individual, as someone to be addressed in normative not strategic terms".

19   This formulation is meant to express that not only is my freedom just your recognition of my freedom and your freedom just my recognition of your freedom but these two acts are also *one single act* which is expressed by saying that I know myself to be free by recognizing you to be free, and you know yourself to be free by recognizing me to be free (cf. Rödl 2021, 629). In other words, mutual recognition is a relation in which *each subject of the relation* knows itself to be the *whole relation*.

In the light of this abstract idea of the good, it is clear that Hegel's account of objectively necessary or obligatory ends is in general agreement with Kant's account of positive duties or virtues. The disagreement concerns the tension between Kant's claim that a good will *must be indifferent to any matter or any particular ends* and Kant's claim that a good will *must have obligatory ends*. Therefore, Hegel objects not merely to Kant's rigorism which is concerned with the tension between *duty* and *desire* but also more generally to his moral subjectivism which concerns the tension between *duty as such* and *particular, obligatory ends*.[20]

Hegel sees this moral subjectivism epitomized in Kant's "empty rhetoric of *duty for duty's sake*" (PR, §135). Moral consciousness is said to have the *right of the subjective will* to know what is good and to will duty for the sake of duty (cf. PR, §132). We have seen that for Hegel, just as for Kant, each *action* must have a determinate *content* or *end* so that the good as such must be determined in order to be realized. Therefore, one cannot simply act from the abstract idea of absolute duty, but acting from duty requires to answer the question of what is duty or good, i.e. to determine the idea of the good (cf. PR, §133-134, cf. PhS, §605, 369-370). Since the idea of the good is the unity of right and well-being, acting from duty means either to act for the sake of doing what is right or for the sake of promoting well-being, be it one's own well-being or the well-being of others.[21]

However, the moral law understood in terms of the contradiction in the will test does not specify how to choose between different obligatory ends, but can serve only to see whether a maxim of action would contradict an obligatory end if universalized. It might be the case that a maxim of action – "I will do action *A* for the sake of providing for the poor" – is in agreement with the obligatory end of promoting the well-being of others, but in contradiction with the obligatory end of doing what is right. For Hegel the problem with the contradiction in the will test is that the idea of the good or the principle of duty is *indeterminate*:

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20   While Wood (1989) is right to insist that the primary target of Hegel's formalism charge against Kant is not the formula of universal law, I will argue that the problem is not merely rigorism but the determination of particular duties. I thus reject Wood's claim (e.g. 1989, 467) that for Hegel the end of an action must always be understood as particular interest or motive, because he also explicitly talks of "universal end" (cf. PR, §123), "objective ends" (§124) or "necessary ends" (§125).

21   In contrast to Kant, Hegel considers not only the well-being of others but also one's own well-being as an essential end and thus as a positive duty (cf. PM, §509).

> For the sake of the indeterminate determination of the Good there are in
> general *manifold* goods and *many kinds of duties*, whose differences stand
> dialectically against each other and bring them into *collision*. At the same
> time they *ought* to stand in agreement for the sake of the unity of the good,
> and at the same time each is, though a particular duty, absolute as duty
> and as good. The subject *should* be the dialectic, which *resolves* (*beschließe*) a
> connection of the same with the exclusion of others and thereby with the
> sublation of this absolute validity. (PM, §508)

This passage already points towards conscience as the dialectical resolution
of the problem of indeterminacy, because conscience determines or resolves
what ought to be done. From the moral standpoint, this contradiction be-
tween acting from duty as such and acting from a particular duty is resolved
by maintaining that universal and particular duty cannot come apart: in acting
morally, one acts from the unity of duties. The moral subject simply knows in
each particular instance what action is called for. For Hegel, conscience is a
shape of moral deliberation according to which only the subject decides which
particular content is to be subsumed under the universal determination of the
good. This subsumption is not a matter of a practical inference but of immedi-
ate practical certainty: "Conscience […] is simple action in accordance with
duty, which fulfills not this or that duty, but knows and does what is concretely
right" (PhS, §635, 386)

In the next section, I will discuss how in being radically subjective, moral con-
science cannot be the adequate answer to the problem of the determination
of the good.

The Moral Subjectivism of Conscience

Conscience is moral self-certainty in that it immediately knows what duty is
and simply acts from its moral conviction. A situation or case of action has
many sides, each of which calls for a *particular duty*. "Conscience knows that it
has to choose between them [duties; F.G.], and to make a decision; for none
of them, in its specific character or in its content, is absolute; only *pure duty*
is that" (PhS, §643, 390). Now, for conscience pure duty only consists in its
own conviction of duty. But this conviction itself is just as empty as the duty
understood as the moral law. Therefore, Hegel argues that the content of con-
science can only be determined through its natural desires and inclinations,
i.e. conscience can have no other source of determination of what ought to
be done except its own sensibility. In other words, conscience determines its

content in virtue of a mere subjective ordering among particular duties. But at the same time, this content counts as moral duty according to the conviction of conscience.

Although the moral law cannot be the standard of objectivity for conscience anymore, conscience cannot simply reject its own claim to objectivity either. Otherwise, it would have the paradoxical logical form "I'm convinced that one ought to do such and such, but one ought not to do such and such". So, conscience must think that every other moral consciousness would recognize its action to be dutiful precisely because it is convinced that its action is duty as such. For conscience, the standard of truth of its action is thus the "the moment of being *recognized* and *acknowledged* by others" (PhS, §640, 388; cf. PR, §112). Therefore, the conscience is Hegel's name for a form of moral deliberation which is bound up with a form of moral assessment, which provides its standard of truth.

Against this background, Hegel presents conscience as a form of moral consciousness which interprets its action as fulfilling duty by holding fast to *one side* of the concrete action which is purported to be the *essential side* of the action being its end (cf. PR, §140R). Conscience can interpret its action, which violates one particular duty, in such a way that the same action realizes another particular duty and thus rather counts as good. "There thus arises a conflict of determinations, for one of them suggests that an action is good, whereas others suggest that it is criminal" (PR, §140R). Given the self-certainty of conscience, this conflict of duties is at first *external* to the form of conscience itself. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel gives the following illustration of such an external conflict:

> An individual increases his property in a certain way; it is everyone's duty to provide for the support of himself and his family, and no less to have regard to the possibility of being useful to his fellow men, and of doing good to those in need. The individual is aware that this is a duty, for this content is directly contained in his certainty of himself; furthermore, he perceives that he fulfils this duty in this particular case. Others, perhaps, hold this specific way of behaving to be humbug; *they* hold to other aspects of the concrete case, *he*, however, holds firmly to this aspect, because he is conscious of the increase of property as a pure duty. Thus, what others call violence and wrongdoing, is the fulfilment of the individual's duty to maintain his independence in face of others; what they call cowardice, is the duty of supporting life and the possibility of being useful to others; but what they, call courage violates both duties. (PhS, §644, 391)

This passage already indicates that for Hegel conscience not only takes the form of judging one's own actions, but also as passing judgement on the actions of others. An action (*Handlung*) as a deed (*Tat*) is an *objective event* which is open for the acting conscience as much as for the other subjects to assess as good or wrong (cf. PR, §112). But insofar each the acting conscience and the other recognizing moral consciousness are equally unbound by any particular content of duty, the determinate action expressing merely the particular self must count as evil rather than good. In other words, others must take the conscience as evil since it gives only subjective reasons why one duty is to be given priority over another in cases where obligatory ends collide. Hegel gives many examples of this collision of duties: stealing in order to provide for the poor, deserting for the sake of my duty to live or to take care of my family, murder in order to take revenge, i.e. to restore what is right, and so on (cf. PR, §140R).

Now, this conflict seems to be resolvable by modifying the form of conscience in terms of reconceiving the relation between its action and its conviction. Instead of taking the action itself as the object for evaluation by others, the conviction that one's action is duty is made into the object to be assessed by declaring one's conviction in a public act of speech. In avowing its conviction, conscience presents its action to the other moral consciences as consisting not really in its *deed* but rather in its *act of speech*. The language itself now serves as the medium for the objectivity of conscience. Hegel writes that

> [t]he content of the language of conscience is the *self that knows itself as essential being*. This alone is what it declares, and this declaration is the true actuality of the act, and the validating of the action. Consciousness declares its *conviction*; it is in this conviction alone that the action is a duty; also it is valid as duty solely through the conviction being declared. (PhS, §653, 396)

Therefore, the discussion of conscience, leads to the so-called 'good heart' (PR, §140R) which is just the *self-conscious form* of conscience because it explicitly holds that whether an action is good only depends on its subjective avowal and the recognition of this avowal. Hegel characterizes this conscience as "the moral genius which knows the inner voice of what it immediately knows to be a divine voice" (PhS, §655, 397). The standard for objectivity of conscience can thus only consist in the recognition of each other's conviction which Hegel ironically describes as a community of beautiful souls in which the subjects are acknowledging each other's actions as good by merely assuring each other of their morally pure convictions.

We can summarize Hegel's dialectic in terms of a dilemma: either there is conflict between different, particular moral consciousnesses which is why none of them can receive recognition and thus moral validation, or there is the harmony of beautiful souls which is why not the particular action itself receives recognition but merely the empty conviction and thus the mutual validation is self-congratulating. Conscience is *infallible* concerning its *form* since it is the case that one's action ought to be in agreement with one's conviction of what ought to be done. But conscience is *fallible* concerning its *content* for it is not the case that any action, which one is convinced that it ought to be done, ought to be done. In short, conscience either forsakes the *determinacy* or the *objectivity* of its conviction.

In the next section, I will reconstruct Hegel's dialectic between acting and judging consciousness as forms of moral deliberation and assessment in order to show why the problem of moral subjectivity can only be overcome in reconceiving these forms of moral consciousness in terms of an act of reconciliation.

Reconciliation as the Resolution of Moral Subjectivism

Hegel introduces the so-called 'acting consciousness' as personifying a *hypocritical form of deliberation* which knows that although one's actions ought to be in agreement with one's conviction of what ought to be done, this does not entail that one's action, which one is convinced ought to be done, ought to be done from a third-person point of assessment.[22] Therefore, Hegel describes the acting consciousness as a form of moral deliberation which knows, on the one hand, that its action is not necessarily a duty for others since it has a particular purpose, and on the other hand, declares that its action is dutiful since its action is conscientious (cf. PhS, §659, 400-401). Put differently, the hypocritical conscience knows that its conviction, what it is convinced it ought to do, and its duty, what it ought to do, can come apart from a *third-person perspective* of 'universal consciousness', but claims that they do not by giving priority to its *first-person perspective* on the relation between its conviction and its action (cf. PhS, §660, 401).[23]

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22   Cf. Moyar (2011, 90-91) for reading hypocrisy as a form of detachment which wrongly infers from the *complex duty* "not to believe X is wrong and do it oneself", that "if one believes X is wrong, then one has a duty not to X oneself", and Wood (1990, 188) for the claim that hypocrisy consists in the misrepresentation of conscience's fallibility.

23   Cf. Ostritsch (2022, 177) on the distinction between first- and third-person perspective on subjective duty.

Contrary to acting consciousness, the so-called 'judging consciousness' describes a *form of moral assessment* which gives priority to the universal consciousness of duty over its own individuality. This form of moral consciousness judges the acting consciousness to be evil because its action serves a particular duty and not duty as such, and even deems it to be hypocritical as the acting consciousness nonetheless claims its action to be dutiful. Already in *The Spirit of Christianity*, Hegel can characterize conscience as hypocritical not only because its action can be interpreted to be done for the sake of selfish or sensible reasons, but also because "it is a representation whose content is made up of the virtues, [...] whose matter is limited, and which therefore are one and all incomplete, while the good conscience, the consciousness of having done one's duty, *hypocritically claims to be the whole*" (ETW, 220, my emphasis).

In what follows, I shall reconstruct Hegel's dialectic of acting and judging consciousness in order to bring out why for Hegel in hard cases of moral conflict there can be no objective determination of what it means to act well, and thus that the conflict can only be resolved by an act of reconciliation understood as the mutual act of confession and forgiveness. In doing so, I shall not only give a reading of Hegel's account of reconciliation in the *Phenomenology* but also marshal Hegel's reflections on reconciliation as resolving the problem of moral formalism in his early theological writings.

The opposition between both forms of moral consciousness is resolved by coming to see the judging consciousness to be equally a form of hypocrisy. First, the judging consciousness is marked by the same mismatch between what it actually does and what it says it is doing. In refraining from acting itself, the judging consciousness does not face the difference between the particular case and universal duty which opens up in action. Nevertheless, the judging consciousness demands that its act of judging is to be taken as an actual deed. In the acting as well as in the judging consciousness the speech-act does not agree with actual action, either because the actual action is done for a particular end or duty, or because it does not act at all (cf. PhS, §664, 403). We can also understand the hypocrisy of the judging consciousness with respect to the practical question of how to determine the particular duty. While the acting consciousness answers this question by determining the universal duty through its particular ends, the judging consciousness merely makes negative verdicts on the answers put forward by acting consciousness, and thus it can be in agreement with duty as such only by criticizing any particular action as violating duty. But this talk of duty is

hypocritical precisely because its indeterminacy is just another expression of refraining from concrete action.

Furthermore, the acting consciousness realizes its identity with the judging consciousness in conceiving of its judgement not as merely negative, but, as Hegel emphasizes, "a positive act of thought" which has "a positive content" (PhS, §665, 403). This stress on positivity is vital, because it shows that it cannot evade the practical question but indeed chooses to regard that end as particular rather than universal by criticizing the acting consciousness. Hegel points to the fact that the judging consciousness can decry any action as immoral, since it can always interpret the action in question as being done for the sake of selfish desires or a particular duty rather than being done for a noble end or duty as such. Accordingly, Hegel claims that "[j]ust as every action is capable of being looked at from the point of view of conformity to duty, so too can it be considered from the point of view of the particularity [of the doer]; for, *qua* action, it is the actuality of the individual" (PhS, §665, 404). The hypocritical nature of this judging consciousness is captured in Hegel's use of the proverb "no man is a hero to his valet" (PhS, §665, 404), because the valet knows very well how to introduce a gap between a seemingly good action and its truly undutiful reasons. In short, the main fault of judging consciousness is that "it divides up the action; producing and holding fast to the disparity of the action with itself" (PhS, §666, 405) and thus "moral reflection can invent collisions [of virtues; F.G.] for itself wherever it likes" (PR, §150R). The up-shot of this discussion is that neither acting nor judging consciousness can determine the good objectively.[24]

Hegel argues that since the judging consciousness has proven to be hypocritical itself, the acting consciousness can see itself not merely different from the judging consciousness but rather identical to it. Appreciating that the other is just as hypocritical as it is itself, acting consciousness confesses its own hypocrisy. It needs to be stressed that Hegel understands 'confession' not in terms of a logical form which involves submitting oneself to the authority of another normative standard by surrendering to the verdict of the judge.[25] On the con-

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24 Cf. Moyar (2011, 126): "The problem is that from the perspective of moral reflection there is no way to decide when conflict counts as genuine and when not. To check this tendency to "invent collisions," we need a shift in perspective away from the individual agent as the sole basis of justification"; and Moyar (2011, 141): "Conscience sets the formal deliberative structure, but each individual on his own cannot secure the conditions of value and cannot determine the correct priority relations".

25 Cf. in particular Stern (2021) for insisting on the fact that for Hegel to confess does not mean surrendering to the authority of the judging consciousness but rather seeing it "as a fellow sinner" (611). Cf. also Disley (2016, 128) for a like-minded interpretation of forgiveness as

trary, confession is conceived through the idea that by recognizing the judging consciousness to be hypocritical it is seen to be characterized by the same logical disagreement between its avowal of conscientious judgement and its actual act of judging. Confession is thus to be conceived as the *negative conviction* in which one distances oneself from one's action not in order to vindicate it but in order to admit that it is wrong. The situation is the reversal of the community of beautiful souls in which each hold fast to each other's positive conviction. It is, what could be called, a community of sinners, in which each declares their wrongness.

The judging consciousness, however, does not reciprocate the confession and thus it does reject standing in community with the acting consciousness. This metaphorical expression is meant to bring out the difference between the logical point of view of judging and of the acting consciousness.[26] While the acting consciousness can see the judging consciousness as hypocritical prior to its confession, the judging consciousness cannot do this. This is because the acting consciousness can come to see the judging consciousness not just as judging but as acting, whereas the judging consciousness cannot immediately come to see the acting consciousness not as acting but as judging by distancing itself from its action in confessing. Therefore, to understand the acting consciousness as judging, the universal consciousness presupposes its confession, whereas to understand the judging consciousness as acting, the particular consciousness does not have confession as a condition.

The 'hard heart' of the judging consciousness breaks in forgiving the confessing, acting consciousness. Just as confession, forgiveness is not construed as coming to see the other's point of view as authoritative, but rather the judging consciousness "renounces the divisive thought, and the hard-heartedness of the being-for-itself which clings to it, because it has in fact seen itself in the first" (PhS, §670, 407; trans. slightly modified).[27] In coming to see the acting consciousness *as universal* consciousness in confessing its action to be wrong, the judging

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transcending any authority-responsibility picture of mutual recognition. Cf., amongst others, Brandom (2019, 592-594) for the mistaken reading of confession as an act in which the acting consciousness submits to the naturalistic standard of assessment by the judge.

26   Most interpretations, cf. (e.g. Stern 2021, 612, Houlgate 2013, 172, Moyar 2011, 165-166), seem not to provide an argument for the necessity of the "hard heart" as a form of moral consciousness.

27   According to Speight (2005, 299) Hegel's concept of forgiveness combines two key ideas according to: "(1) an *overcoming of resentment* that is based on a *revision of judgment* and (2) a recognition of conditions affecting both agency and judgment in general," such as the fallibility, the self-interest of motives, and the potential for evil.

consciousness forgives the other which means that it "acknowledges that what thought characterized as bad, viz. action, is good; or rather it abandons this distinction of the specific thought and its *subjectively* (*fürsichseiendes*) determining judgement" (PhS, §670, 408; trans. slightly modified). As in his *The Spirit of Christianity*, Hegel criticizes the judging consciousness by appropriating Jesus exhortation "judge not".[28] In learning not to judge, the judging consciousness learns to take the action of others to be "only a *moment* of the whole" (PhS, §669, 407), and thus instead of dividing the whole action into a particular and universal side through its judgement, it learns to bear the individual *as a whole* (cf. ETW, 222-223) "[f]or the sinner is more than a sin existent" (ETW, 238).

The reconciliation between acting and judging consciousness consists of the acts of confessing and forgiveness through which each of the subjects lets go of their particular action or particular judgment. First, an act of confession or forgiveness depends on being recognized as confession or forgiveness. Therefore, one's confession is the other's recognition of my confession, which just is the other's forgiveness, and one's forgiveness is the other's recognition of one's forgiveness, which just is the other's confession. However, these are not two different acts but aspects of *one single act*, which is why one's confession is just one's recognition of the other's forgiveness, and one's forgiveness is just one's recognition of the other's confession. In other words, in letting go of one's claim to be morally good one recognizes being vindicated by the other's act of letting go of their claim to be morally good. Hegel's argument can thus be seen to capture the rational core of Jesus's dialectic teaching that "whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Mtt. 16:25; cf. Joh. 12:25).[29]

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28 Cf. ETW, 237-238, my emphasis: "'Judge not that ye be not judged; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' The measuring rod is law and right. The first of these commands, however, *cannot mean: Whatever illegality you overlook in your neighbor and allow to him will also be overlooked in you. A league of bad men grants leave to every member to be bad*. No, it means: Beware of taking righteousness and love as a dependence on laws and as an obedience to command *instead of regarding them as issuing from life*. […] You are then setting up for yourself and for others an alien power over your deed; you are elevating into an absolute what is only a fragment of the whole of the human heart". Therefore, Stern's reading goes astray in conceiving of forgiveness in terms of the realization that I could have acted as badly as you have done (cf. 2021, 611). We will see that the judge renounces her authority on what counts as good not because she is *as wrong as* the acting consciousness but rather because she sees that in confessing the acting consciousness is *identical with* the universal consciousness which the judging consciousness is supposed to be.

29 Hegel characterizes the forgiving consciousness as having "the highest freedom, i.e., the potentiality of renouncing everything in order to maintain one's self. Yet the man who seeks to save his life will lose it. Hence supreme guilt is compatible with supreme innocence; the

The result of our discussion is that the practical problem of how to objectively determine what ought to be done is not solvable through a moral principle. Being universal, no moral principle can guarantee the unity of the particular duties or, as Hegel also calls them, virtues:[30]

> A *living bond* of the virtues, a *living unity*, is quite different from the *unity of the concept*; it does not set up a determinate virtue for determinate circumstances, but appears, even in the most variegated mixture of relations, untorn and unitary. Its external shape may be modified in infinite ways; it will never have the same shape twice. *Its expression will never be able to afford a rule, since it never has the force of a universal opposed to a particular.* (ETW, 246; emphasis of the author)

This means that for Hegel virtue, or particular duty, is not to be understood in terms of an abstract moral principle prior to its determination. But, as we have seen, determination of virtue is also not achievable by conscience hypocritically silencing all other possibilities of how to act. The practical question cannot be solved but rather is *resolved* in coming to realise that in hard cases of action any actual action and judgement will turn out to be morally wrong in some way and that both can only be justified if each relinquishes its claim to be justified. Hence, the unity of virtue or duty is only negatively achievable by renouncing one's particular, one-sided conception of the good in a mutual act of confession and forgiveness.[31] Hegel makes this point in his early theological writings as follows:

> Only when no virtue claims to subsist firmly and absolutely in its restricted form; only when every restricted virtue renounces its insistence on entering even that situation into which it alone can enter; only when it is simply

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supreme wretchedest fate with elevation above all fate" (ETW, 236).

30 I take it that Hegel's use of "virtue" includes not only Kant's duties of virtue but also the duties of right in Hegel's sense such that virtue is to be understood as *particular* duty in contrast to duty *as such*, although for Hegel duty as such must itself also be conceived of as a particular duty. But Hegel sometimes (cf. PM, §516) also uses the word "duty" to mean objective norms governing forms of ethical life and the term "virtue" to mean an individual's action conformity to these ethical standards. In the present discussion, however, I will treat them as synonymous.

31 Hegel's view of the unity of virtue resembles the view in McDowell (1979) insofar as both reject the idea of a universal moral principle which could be articulated through an abstract concept instead of a living conception (cf. 336-342). However, they differ with respect to whether this living conception can be positively understood in terms of moral "sensitivity" (cf. 332-334) as a capacity to understand what is morally "salient" in the context of a given situation (cf. 344), or whether it can manifest itself only in the light of moral conflict or "hard cases" (cf. 340), and thus through the very failure of any claims of moral sensitivity which is construed in quite a similar way to the failure of conscience's moral self-certainty. In contrast to McDowell, Hegel's unity of virtues is understood only in the act of reconciliation and thus by letting go of one's determination of what ought to be done.

> the one living spirit which acts and restricts *itself* in accordance with the whole of the given situation, in complete absence of external restriction, and without at the same time being divided by the manifold character of the situation; then and then only does the many-sidedness of the situation remain, though the mass of absolute and incompatible virtues vanishes. (ETW, 245)

In this passage, Hegel links the collision of virtues with the idea that only certain aspects of a context of action are perceived to be morally salient, since to perceive a situation is already to perceive it as calling for something and as answering to the question of what ought to be done in a given case (cf. PhS, §401, 240, §643, 390).[32] Consequently, forgiveness involves reconstruing the intention and context of action in such a way that the action is justified on this new interpretation. This reinterpretation does not need to answer to the original interpretation of the acting consciousness precisely because in confessing it has relinquished its authority. Therefore, the problem of how to objectively determine what ought to be done can be overcome in reconciliation, because by confessing to the other to not have acted from duty as such, one therein recognizes that one is forgiven for having acted from this duty and not from another duty, and by forgiving the other for having acted from this duty and not from another duty one therein recognizes the other to confess to not having acted from duty as such.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to compare the concept of ethical life and reconciliation as Hegel's two answers to moral subjectivism, I shall conclude by claiming that he still leaves room for the role of conscience and thus by extension to reconciliation within ethical life. For although "rectitude" can be considered as the virtue of ethical life, Hegel holds that

> [w]ithin a given ethical order whose relations are fully developed and actualized, *virtue in the proper sense* has its place and actuality only in extraordinary circumstances, or where the above relations come into collision. But such *collisions* must be genuine ones, for moral reflection can invent collisions for itself wherever it likes. (PR, §150R)

Genuine normative conflicts can still arise within ethical life, because they concern "extraordinary circumstances" (PR, §150R). Such genuine normative conflicts cannot be solved by the objective norms of ethical life – which demand that the agent simply gives precedence to broader purposes, such as social roles, in cases in which they conflict with one's own or other's particular interests – but must rather be resolved in an equally *concrete* act of reconciliation.

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32   Cf. McDowell (1979, 335, 345).

Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that Hegel conceives of reconciliation not only as the answer to moral rigorism, but also to the more general problem of moral subjectivism he sees epitomized in Kantian moral philosophy. Consequently, I have rejected the standard interpretation as too narrow, and defended a broader reading which highlights that Hegel also seeks to dissolve the problem of how to determine the good objectively. First, I have argued that Hegel's formalism charge targets not so much the *emptiness* of Kant's contradiction in the conception test, but rather *indeterminacy* of Kant's contradiction in the will test and thus Kant's subjectivism understood as the tension between acting from pure duty and acting on a particular, obligatory end. For Hegel, Kant's moral philosophy thus dialectically requires conscience as the form of moral consciousness, which is certain of how to determine what the good is. For this reason, Hegel's objections to Kant's moral philosophy are ultimately bound up with his rejection of grounding ethics in moral conscience. The subsequent discussion of acting and judging consciousness has shown that both guises of moral consciousness suffer from the problem of determining the action-description in such a way that it must appear to be good or wrong. We have seen that for Hegel the self-conceit and self-righteousness of moral conscience is superseded in reconciliation by letting go of their fancy of moral purity. In conclusion, I have argued that for Hegel the question of what ought to be done is to be answered in terms of reconciliation understood as a mutual relation of confessing and forgiving, in which the good is known negatively by renouncing one's particular conception of what ought to be done in case of moral conflict.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Drive for the Good World to Come
Hegel's Conceptualisation of Beginnings and Ends[*]

Goran Vranešević

This chapter will attempt to conceptually dissect the conditions of possibility for the idea of the good as introduced by Hegel in his *Outline of a Philosophy of Right*. We must certainly not overlook that there are very convincing studies on the systemic place occupied by the idea of the good as it is featured in *Science of Logic*, but while taking this into account, our analysis will focus on the conditions produced by the notion of the good in the framework of Hegel's practical philosophy. This is expressed in "the practical activity of the idea", or more precisely described as "the drive of the good to bring itself about" (TWA 10, § 225/Hegel 2010b, 291). There are readings that take into account Hegel's other political stage where politics and religion work hand in hand; however, that is not our intention here. The idea of the good is the pivotal concept by which Hegel strives to grasp our social world, explicating that which the social protagonists already know, but he uses the scientific method to render it in the least distorted possible form. Let us start with a basic outline of the field occupied by the idea of the good.

While there is a long tradition of associating the notion of the good with freedom,[1] there is also something fatalistic about the first instance of the good as outlined by Hegel, since according to him the obligation of the will arises directly in relation to the good. The will must do the work necessary to fit into the category of the good, but the good itself becomes what it is by being recognised as good by the will. This arduous task, to which the will subjects itself, also contains the traces of the world to come. For this reason, this work should not be understood as blind fatalism, in which everything is pre-determined by preceding events, but as a fatalism of necessary freedom, as a kind of precondition for things to happen. Things must happen by themselves for freedom to settle in, but we must maintain the illusion that the worst has already occurred. This is the kind of experience we have when we fall in love, when we should not exactly be expecting and planning at every corner for it to actually come to pass, but rather allowing it to happen on the assumption that in relation to the will, love *ought* to be substantial for it.[2] In the same respect, good is an idea that cannot be predicted or calculated in terms that are preconditioned by the world, as that idea actually preconditions the world. It is in this light that the idea of the good should also be understood as it appears in Hegel's *Outline of a Philosophy of Right*, namely as "the absolute end of the world" (*der Absolute Endzweck der Welt*) (TWA 7, §129/Hegel 2008, 126).

Before turning to endings, it is essential to emphasise just what this final end is: it is ultimately defined in the encounter with reason as actualized self-consciousness. More specifically, the final end of life, following the ancient Greek ideal, is that which is willed "for the sake of being one with oneself with the self-consciousness" (Pinkard 2012, 174), but in the modern world it is all the more tethered by contingency and finitude. We must be mindful that the world is to be understood here as the world of the spirit,[3] the "realm of

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1   For Locke, it is the greatest *felt* good that determines the will: "But yet upon a stricter inquiry, I am forced to conclude, that good, the greater good, though apprehended and acknowledged to be so, does not determine the will, until our desire, raised proportionably to it, makes us uneasy in the want of it" (Locke 1997, 234). And in his eyes, will is practically inseparable from freedom: "The principal exercise of Freedom is to stand still, open the eyes, look about, and take a view of the consequence of what we are going to do, as much as the weight of the matter requires" (ibid., 254).

2   To put it more bluntly, in love "the adventurous side is necessary, but equally so is the need for tenacity" (Badiou 2012, 32).

3   Let us not forget that "the spirit is not some one mode of meaning which finds utterance or externality only in a form distinct from itself: it does not manifest or reveal something, but its very mode and meaning is this revelation. And thus in its mere possibility spirit is at the same moment an infinite, 'absolute', actuality" (TWA 10, §383/Hegel 2007, 17).

actualised freedom" produced as "second nature" (TWA 7, §4/Hegel 2008, 26). Free choices made only have any weight because they are pulled by the gravity of the rationality and self-sufficiency of this final end. This does not mean, of course, that the freedom to which the subject aspires here is actually realised, since it is still not subject to the demand for the universality and objectivity of its determinations. Here we are still in the realm of morality in Hegel's system of right, a perspective that characterises the ties between the social fabric and individual actors as contingent, governed by arbitrary self-will (*Willkür*). So even the purest, most selfless acts in this respect concern only the individual good, while the rational social institutions and practices and the collective good are merely "external conditions for deliberation" (Wood 1997, 157). Whereas moral law is grounded in individual actions, which is in reality the position to which Kant is bound, freedom comes to its actual realisation in the following realm, in ethical life. More precisely, this ethical substance is in its highest right expressed in the absolute spirit of the State,[4] which is an essential subject in the unfolding of the philosophy of right, but will be left for another occasion.

The good, as introduced by Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right* at the end of the chapter on morality, is expressed only as an abstraction, and as such as that which "ought only to be", thus binding the subject to his own abstraction, which "ought only to be good" (TWA 7, §141/Hegel 2008, 155). The abstract universality of the good becomes concrete only when it passes into ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) through the identity of the good and the subjective will. The good, precisely because it is bound to a particular (subjective) will, which as such constitutes the emergence of the modern age,[5] is always on the precipice of turning evil. This inclination arises at the moment when the particularity of individual arbitrariness (*Willkür*) prevails over the universal.[6] We will return to the idea of evil in relation to will. Meanwhile, the "living

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4   It is pertinent to mention but one detail relating to the unveiling of the world: "The state is the divine will, in the sense that it is spirit present on earth, unfolding itself to be the actual shape and organization of a world" (TWA 7, §270/Hegel 2008, 244).

5   Modernity is rooted in modern freedom and self-determination, where freedom is closely defined through the right to particularity: "the subject, an entity reflected into himself and so particular in relation to objective particularity, has in his end his own particular content, and this content is the soul of the action and determines its character. The fact that this moment of the particularity of the agent is contained and realized in the action constitutes subjective freedom in its more concrete sense, the right of the subject to find his satisfaction in the action" (TWA 7, §121/Hegel 2008, 120).

6   The inappropriateness of the good is also explicated by Hegel when he refers to the principle of moral subjectivity something that "determines nothing" (TWA 7, §148/Hegel 2008, 141).

good" (TWA 7, §142/Hegel 2008, 154),[7] which is another name for the ethical life (as the idea of freedom), overcomes this risk of abstract indeterminacy by being determined through the form of its moments in knowledge and determinacy. The good is thus limited to the moral standpoint, which is the standpoint of the will insofar as it is in itself and so does not yet embrace self-consciousness. As such, the good within morality is bound up in an abstract relation with conscience (*Gewissen*), where the good appears as infinite content without form and conscience as indeterminate form without content.

Before we can examine the structure that sustains the affirmative status of the good, we must first justify the alternating use of the logical and the practical notion of the good. Usually, it is assumed that the logical idea of the good is not directly reproduced in the good found in the section on morality in *Philosophy of Right*. The idea of the good is namely commonly examined through the framework of a logical structure reflecting "the abstract element of thought" (TWA 10, §19), whereas the moral good is an action pertaining to specific individuals. Thus, although in the first instance the idea of the good is 'only' a logical moment in the unfolding of the concept, the good, expressed through the moral-practical act of the subject, is itself embedded in a speculative matrix, whose form is the idea of logic.[8] There is a logical core of the ethical life embodied in the idea of the good, which means that both have the formal character of *Sollen*. We can also refer to Hegel's conclusion that "every abstract moment of science must correspond to the image of the phenomenal spirit" (TWA 3, 589/Hegel 2018, 465), i.e. every speculative notion of logic must correspond to a specific factual explication in the *Phenomenology*, and the same requirement is transferred to the philosophy of spirit, where the moral good has its place, but this does not mean that this conceptual iteration does not lead to a transformation of the system as such. An identical emphasis is made in the *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel equates free will with pure thinking of oneself and says that "those who treat thinking as a special, peculiar faculty, separate from the will [...] reveal at the very outset their complete ignorance of the nature of the will" (TWA 7, §5/Hegel 2008, 28-29). Despite this

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7   By the living good, Hegel refers to Aristotle's characterisation of the highest actuality, which for him is a foundation that has being in and for itself (*die an und für sich seinde Grundlage),* or a motivating end (*bewegende Zweck*) (TWA 7, §142/Hegel 2008, 155).

8   Christoph Halbig in this respect mentions that the idea of the good must not be understood as the fundamental grammar of Hegel's practical philosophy: "That which is part of the grammar of human activity, such as the orientation towards the good according to the classical thesis, cannot be a historical achievement" (2009, 97).

conceptual overlapping of the unfolding of the idea, of which Hegel himself was well aware,[9] there are fundamental differences between both instances of the idea of the good in terms of the lived experience and of the community. This idea namely cannot be guaranteed in advance, like a minted coin, but must be revealed through analysis. Let us assume that this justification is sufficient for the purposes of the discussion at hand.

Since the good is that which is supposed to contain all determinations (GW 26,1, §73, 287), there is often a common fallacy, a deception, that the good, the absolute good, is eternally realised in the world, which leads to the conclusion that "it is already fulfilled in itself, and does not have to wait for us" (TWA 8, §R212/Hegel 2010b, 282). But such a notion of the good would remain an aim somewhere beyond our grasp, eternally unattainable, since it contains no actuality. The ultimate end of the good expresses "what is and ought to be" (*was ist und sein soll*) (GW 26,1, §65, 68), but it needs *time* to unfold, and it cannot do so without the subjective will. *Sollen* (ought-to-be) does indeed appear as an inclination for overcoming boundaries, since there is no limit inscribed in it, but it is propagated towards this final end by the drive for realisation, which "wants to give itself objectivity in the objective world through itself and to realize itself" (TWA 6, 542/Hegel 2010a, 729). If the final end of the good requires such a specific drive, it is also necessary to articulate the initial impulse that sets the drive for the good in motion.

Before we get things finally underway and analyse the unfolding of the idea, it is also necessary to point out a few ambiguities and show the structural link between the universal end and the particular will of the subject who decides to strive for the good. The most common readings of the Hegelian philosophy assume that the whole movement of logic is driven by the speculative method, which appears as the drive (*Trieb*)[10] of the immanent movement of pure thinking. We are not disputing this, but the work of logic is too prominent for our topic at hand not to be precise, because the emphasis on dialectical efforts and speculative turns overshadows the

9   With practically the opening words of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes the following remarks regarding the relationship between logic and the practical sphere: "[…] to prove and emphasise the logical progression in each and every detail. In part, this could be considered superfluous, assuming familiarity with the scientific method, but in part it is obvious that the whole, like the formation of its parts, is based on the logical spirit" (TWA 7, §2/Hegel 2008, 4).

10   For various reasons, recent translations use impulse for *Trieb* (e. g. *The Science of Logic*; however, we will keep the notion of drive ourselves because it also encompasses the trait of force that propels the object onward. Hegel ties the drive directly to the Greek *Φορά*, which denotes action, but also something that is brought forth or borne into motion.

subjects own initial gesture, when simple immediacy is integrated into mediation, which turns out to be "mediation as this sublation of itself" (TWA 5, 123/Hegel 2010a, 89).

Hegel devoted an entire chapter to the inner structure of beginning in *The Science of Logic*, but we will only be interested here in one detail that he points out in this regard. It is that moment that cuts through the indeterminacy of the moment when nothing has yet occurred and the next instant when we are already with both feet fully engaged in the realisation of reason that becomes our purpose. On the one hand, in the same spirit that is present in the division of philosophy or the idea itself, here, too, we have only something anticipated in our hands, while on the other hand, we lay bare the conditions for the movement of reason towards its realisation. How does Hegel proceed here? At the very outset of thinking, as its initial impulse, he places the decision (*Nur der Entschluß*) (TWA 5, 68) that we should want to consider thinking as such.[11] In the *Encyclopaedia*, he describes this decision as "a free act of thought" (TWA 10, § 16/Hegel 2010b, 45). Since this is an empty decision, because it presupposes nothing and has no grounds, it can be considered arbitrary. Nevertheless, it is the foundation of all science, for as a speculative beginning it is pure being, which only by moving forward, through the images of actualization, returns to its foundation, to absolute knowledge and inner truth, in which it dissolves into the image of immediate being. Beginnings are by their nature pure being, which only through moving forward, through the appearances of actualization, returns to its foundation, to absolute knowledge and inner truth, in which it dissolves into the form of immediate being. Hence Hegel's observation that "the first also becomes the last and the last the first" (TWA 5, 70/Hegel 2010a, 49). If we return our attention to the initial subjective gesture of a decision as a movement of the concept, this subjective assumption, like space, number, etc., on other occasions, makes thought itself the object of thought. Of course, it is only in the concept (through mediation) that reason is established as the ground and truth, in which being and essence are contained, albeit in a sublated form. The willed decision is treated more directly in the *Philosophy of Right*, which Hegel frames in terms of the question of whether the rational drive of the will is good.

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11   This is an elementary presupposition, echoing the minimal proposition of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that knowledge is that something can be known. To this, Hegel added an aid in the form of a cognitive ladder: "science at least offers him [the subject] a ladder to this position, to show him in himself" (TWA 3, §27/Hegel 2018, 17).

Now, let us turn our attention back to the idea of the good. There is a vast sea of literature on the issue of whether human nature is good or evil,[12] fuelled in particular by theological concerns, where the question of free will is reduced to a debate about original sin. Of course, in the context of the present discussion, the more relevant ideas are those of the radical evil and its other side, the banality of evil, which see in the very activity of thought the conditions that deter or attract people to evil action. The basic framework for these reflections is formed by ideas such as those of Rousseau, who contrasted the original good that the individual possesses in the state of nature with the corruption that infects the individual in culture. Similarly, we find in Kant the opposition of nature (as the aggregate of matter and the senses) to the rationality of the spirit and the self-referral of the will, seduced by the inclination to evil. Curiously, Hegel also follows this logic when he recognises in natural dynamism and inclinations that it introduces contingency, finitude, potentiality and conditioning by the drive into the will, a curtailed freedom and rationality, which is only valid on condition that nature is understood as absolutely self-sufficient. However, this is only true if nature is understood as absolutely self-sufficient. If we take all these elements (or determinations) as rational, integrated into the will as its own determinations, embodying the concretisation of the spirit, then they must be integrated into the purpose. In other words, the thinking reason is here a decision for finitude (TWA 7, §13/Hegel 2008, 36), which means that these individual modes of determination through natural predispositions appear in the form of distinct content. What is crucial for our discussion of the good at this point is that this content stands in for the will as something possible, which is, by this determination, arbitrariness (*Willkür*), since it is grounded on the contingency of choice conditioned in this form by the multiplicity of drives. To avoid misunderstandings, let me mention that we are here on the ground of the spirit, of the realisation of right, where self-determination and the self-production of the drive take the reins, and it is therefore unproductive

12   On the side of the representatives of human good nature, Rousseau stands out. In a letter to Archbishop Beaumont, Rousseau argued that the idea of human natural goodness is "the fundamental principle of all morality" (2001, 935), since all vices can be explained without attributing them to "the human heart […] There is not a single vice to be found in it of which it cannot be said how and whence it entered" (ibid., 28). Although society is the condition of the common good, it is also the root of all tendencies against the good as such. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, is the finest spokesman for human evil nature: "Original sin is both sin and punishment. It is already present in the newborn children, but only manifests itself when they grow up" (2020, 293). Man's original sin, however, is not to his detriment, but rather his adoption, by virtue of his nature, of the principle of individuation, according to which he is a distinct and unique entity.

to introduce further the relationship with the natural drive (*Naturtrieb*), which are more accurately defined as instinct, since drive is directly reflected in free will.[13] We will return to drives again briefly, but at this point let us just mention a few examples given by Hegel. These include, inter alia, the drive for the right, the drive for property, the drive for morality, the drive for sexual love, and the drive for sociability. It is good to have this set of examples in mind because it is then easier to understand the manner in which Hegel uses the concept of the drive in the immanent unfolding of specific concepts.

With the aforementioned arbitrariness, we can do practically anything we want. But at the same time, the choice we make is not final, because we can change our minds and decide differently and so on ad infinitum, which means that these are always one-sided final moments. This movement of specific moments, propelled by the drive of the spirit, the drive that Hegel calls "the rational system of the determination of the will" (TWA 7, §19/Hegel 2008, 40), which here also takes the form of an arbitrary subordinating and sacrificial determination, is nevertheless based on the fact that the subjects decide (*sich entschliessen*) (TWA 7, §12/Hegel 2008, 36). It is only by making a decision, by drawing determinations and purposes out of the indeterminacy of the will that the subject sets in motion the drive of "free will" as self-determination, the drive that animates or brings the universality of thought to the surface. Such is the conclusion in the *Science of Logic*. It is therefore unsurprising that Hegel places the will (in reference to the Logic) at the very beginning of the *Philosophy of Right*, the system of the realisation of freedom, though at first necessarily in an arbitrary form, since it is only "absolute determination" (TWA 7, §27/Hegel 2008, 46) that shifts rationality from subjective determinations to objective ones, and remains in objectivity with itself. In short, it is by referring to itself that it sublates the initial direct nature of determination and the contingency of content. This detail is crucial for our search for a good world, because in this immediacy man can indeed be inherently good, if the determinations of the will are positive, but he can also be evil, depending on arbitrary choice, if the determinations are against freedom and the spirit.

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13   There is always a certain tendency that the natural drives are read in conjunction with the death drive, which is the fourth limb of psychoanalysis, along with repetition, transference, and the unconscious. It should in no way be included among the biological predispositions or their distortions, since it represents the blind spot in the progress of the constitution of reason, which Lacan somewhere describes as a movement outwards and backwards. This can be roughly understood as the separation of the subject from the immediate givenness (that never existed). Therefore, we can say that the death drive belongs to free will and not to biological instincts.

We have already mentioned that Hegel is quite clear in his use of drives and in distinguishing the natural drives from the drives of the spirit, although, as befits speculative logic, he includes them, namely the natural drives, in the realisation of reason. The highest and only drive is defined by Hegel as the movement of the concept itself, which "in everything finds and knows itself through itself" (TWA 6, 249/Hegel 2010a, 749, revised translation by the author). This is also why the drive has its place at the beginning, as a kind of impetus for things to start moving out of the simple fixity of thought and go from there. This first universality has the meaning of being, which is, however, so poor that there is no need to make any special fuss about it (TWA 6, 554/ Hegel 2010a, 739). There seems here to be much ado about nothing, but this "unanalysable" beginning, as Hegel puts it, is supposed to accompany the re-alisation of reason until it coincides with itself in the absolute final end of the objective spirit or the idea of the good. As the good enters into actuality only through the mediation of the subjective will and is "only in thinking and by means of thinking" (TWA 7, §132/Hegel 2008, 127), the question remains open how the good, which acts as the core of our essence, is determined, if the subject arbitrarily (TWA 7, §139/Hegel 2008, 136) handles the principle of positing in this process. There are two possibilities; the subjective will in its self-certainty is either "willing the universality of the concept" (ibid.) or is simply evil, principally willing a particular content, something in opposition to universality.[14] Hegel is not bound by theologically inspired principles of evil. Indeed, the idea of evil is tied together with human will by Kant's argument of radical evil, which does not figure as man's "dark essence" but which comes to expression precisely through the subjective inclination towards freedom. Free will namely brings with it all the potential for choosing evil (AA 6 / RGV, 32), but also the more conventional option of obedience to the Law imposed by practical reason (AA 5, 161). This is significant because a subject who aspires toward a good world is always one decision away from falling into the void of unreason. And that is why it is all the more important to preserve the full weight of the spirit.

Having examined the initial gesture that propels us towards the good world, it is now time to point out the aforementioned premise that the good world acts as the final end (*Endzweck*). The final end does not end the work of the

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14   Evil as the other side of good is convincingly discussed from various perspectives in the pres-
      ent volume. As a logical form, evil is presented as "the one of a thought-determination which,
      being the self-reference that has negated the independence of the otherness, posits itself as
      self-subsistent and claims to be absolute" (La Rocca 2024, 130).

concept, since it is not an end (*Ende*) and ends are a matter of nature, which is its own end without the need to establish a relation to will or sense. The final end is, on the contrary, something realised that has no end. The phrase *in the end* is conceptually very close to what *Endzweck* refers (the Slovenian phrase *konec koncev* [the end of ends] comes even closer by doubling the ending, thereby encapsulating its irreversible nature) and can be used to understand what in the end becomes of the good in the context of morality.

In Kant's essay, *Das Ende Aller Dinge*, written shortly before *Zum ewigen Frieden*, as a kind of flip side, a bleak side, full of productive derivations that we will not deal with in detail at this time, he basically touches on the question "why do people expect the world to end at all?" (AA 8, 331) To this, he responds that human reason dictates that "the world has value only insofar as rational beings are in conformity with the final end of their existence" (ibid.), which he directly relates to the pursuit of the highest good. Otherwise, creation as such is worthless and vain for him.[15] In Kant's system, reason, in a practical sense, can never do enough to reach the ultimate goal if we follow the path of constant change (ibid., 334). In this way, he is actually committed to the principle of *Sollen* (Kant's never conclusive thought), which subsumes under itself both the end (*das Ende*) and the final end (*Endzweck*). But because the stakes are so high, this path to the highest good should not be seen as a simple overcoming of an endless series of ills (*Übeln*), for we remain unsatisfied until we have concretely thought it through and exhausted it.

To resolve this endless journey into the abyss of reason, which is committed to the aim of the moral good, Kant introduces an imaginary perspective, an imaginative (*Einbildung*) notion of the end, of the last act of thinking: things cease to move and stand still, "the whole of nature is rigid and virtually petrified" (*die ganze Nature starr und gleichsam versteinert*) (ibid., 334). The last thought and feeling is thus the suspension of thought in its own being, an event that Kant equates with annihilation (*Vernichtung*). Kant is unable to accept this tragic conclusion, because for him it results either in nihilism, mysticism, or pantheism, all of which abolish thought but of which all are the consistent result of the very imagination of the end, the end as the fulfilment of the final end, accompanied by a state of "contentment" (*Zufriedenheit*), in short, eternal rest (*ewige Ruhe*), a state free of inner tension, of excitement.

This logical idea of a peaceful repose, which interrupts the endless process of morality and as such causes discomfort for Kant, is for Hegel, on the contrary, the rest

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15   "Like a play that has no ending at all and reveals no reasonable intention" (ibid. 332).

period of a perfected life, not its last moment. This proposition must be read to-gether with Hegel's insistence that the notion of Spinozist substance corresponds to the movement of the concept, substance as "one indivisible totality" (TWA 6, 195/Hegel 2010a, 472), into which everything independently dissolves (*aufgelöst*) and is thus determined through negation. In this respect, substance can be read as an absolute, which, strictly speaking, is not the progression and overcoming of something simple, but the determination of the universal, in which all particular modes are abolished and enveloped.[16] And it is in the recognition and acceptance of a necessary identity with the whole that we must seek freedom.

Despite this tendency for sublation and overcoming, let us not forget Hegel's incessant struggle with the end: end of history, end of art, and even the end of religion. But all these depictions of the spirit at the end of their days are not depictions of a radical end[17] or the realisation of a purpose, but signifiers of something incomplete, not of something that will not have happened again. All these shapes of the spirit are merely at the end of their highest form, e.g. art with the Greek world, which does not mean that they will not reach further formal perfection. Hegel's *Phenomenology* ends on an identical note, where one would expect to be brought directly face to face with a kind of absolute embodiment of *Endzweck* in the form of pure thinking.[18] Instead, it ends abruptly with a modi-fied quotation from Schiller's poem on *Friendship*, which upends spirit's elegant self-fashioning with an image of formless excess and evanescence of infinity:

> Out of the chalice of this realm of spirits
> Foams forth to him his infinity.[19]

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16   The method of absolute knowledge is, as Hegel says, "analytic" in the sense of dealing with the thing in itself and for itself, but equally "synthetic" (GW 6, 557/Hegel 2010a, 741), since the immediate universal is revealed as something else.

17   There is also a very productive reading of the end, offered by Marcus Quent, in the present volume. Instead of linking the end to aims and purposes, which is manifested through the realisation of the good, he rather makes use of it in its radical form as doom: "Only where time has become the deadline is it possible that humans are 'awakening to the idea of the whole', 'giving form' to it, and realizing their good end" (Quent 2024, 203).

18   "But the thinking that is purely for itself is a thinking of what is most exquisite in and for itself – an absolute end for itself" (GW 19, 162).

19   See TWA 3, §808/Hegel 2018, 467. Interestingly, Hegel takes liberties in writing Schiller's last stanza. To compare its original: "Out of the chalice of the entire realm of souls / Foams forth to him — the infinity" (Schiller 1943, 111). There are at least two opposing interpreta-tions tied to this difference. The final end on the path of self-consciousnesses to self-certainty ends with a final gesture of certainty that either affirms the finitude of such endeavours, as it "drinks its infinity from a specific chalice […] its truth therefore circumscribed" (Pahl 2012, 98), or acts violently as a "reference to divine lack" (Comay 2018, 74).

Exertion of the concept therefore does not end, nor does it come to rest. Conclusions in philosophy, after all, remain wide open and uncertain.

Finally, to return to the section on the idea of the good, it begins in the manner of films with an impending disaster looming, where the end is shown first, and then we follow the events that led up to that end. One of the more effective is certainly Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011), the second instalment within the Depression trilogy, which opens and ends the film with images of the Earth colliding with a rogue planet. The characters are not so individually impacted by this catastrophic event, as the family disintegration was already well underway. The community as such is never addressed, obscured by the impending universal destruction. This unimaginable totality of the end, just like the dissolution of the family in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, is unavoidable. In such a reading, the film in the context of the trilogy can be understood as a melancholic reflection of the development of the idea of absolutely free will: the dissolution of the family of the *Melancholia* is preceded by the isolation of the free will (*Antichrist*, 2009)[20] and followed by the overabundance of enjoyment in civil society (*Nymphomaniac*, 2013). In brief, a world of morality and particularity must end for ethical life to have a "happy end". In the *Philosophy of Right*'s section on good and conscience, the "absolute final *end and aim* of the world" (TWA 7, §129/Hegel 2008, 126) plays an identical role, which is realised through "integration" and "demonstration" (TWA 7, §141/Hegel 2008, 151-152) into the absolutes of the following paragraphs in this work. At the very end of the section, of course, it ends with the announcement that we are now entering the order of ethics (*Sittlichkeit*). The drive for the good is transformed into duty by passing into morality, as the rational system of determining the will acquires another form.

The good world to come can thus manifest itself as a necessary imagination (*Einbildung*), as an appearance of the good in concrete form, but if it is consistently realised, it must be preserved as an imaginary, because it is realised by emptying out the substantiality with which it comes into being, thereby dissolving it, negating even the drive that sustained it. For the idea of the good can only be an empty idea, an idea, as Hegel puts it, that has "evaporated" (TWA 7, §141/Hegel 2008, 152). But this does not mean that the imagination of the good is there only for decoration, for in its imaginary form it holds this emptiness together, and must therefore remain, as always, coming.

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20   A description of the pure form of this figure is given by Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right*: "insatiable greed of subjectivity, which gathers up and consumes everything within the simple source of the pure I" (TWA 7, §26/Hegel 2008, 45).

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CHAPTER FOUR

Non-Natural Goodness

Sebastian Rödl

Introduction

I want to consider the idea of the good. The idea I mean is the one that opens up practical thought: thought of what to do and how to act. Knowing what to do is knowing what is good to do; it is knowing what to do so as to act well. My theme is that 'good': the formal object of practical knowledge, what practical knowledge as such knows.

I want to consider the proposal, put forth by Foot and Thompson, that this 'good' is a certain natural goodness. That is a thesis of logical form: the goodness known in practical knowledge, it asserts, is a *physis*, a certain natural life.

A form of thought is revealed to be the logical form of the good as it is shown to sustain all practical knowledge. Therefore, in order to discuss Foot and Thompson, we go through a sequence of forms in which goodness is thought. This will let us see how familiar ways of understanding the good go wrong because they think it through a form that cannot sustain itself; it will let us place Thompson's proposal in relation to these. Eventually, it will show her

proposal to be flawed, too: the goodness thought in practical thought is no natural goodness.

The logical form in which good first appears is the representation of means. This form is quickly seen to be subordinate to one that represents an end in itself. That is life; the idea of the good is the idea of life. The form in which life first appears is the representation of natural life. This may suggest that practical thought is thought of a natural life, and that is Foot's idea. Yet it will emerge that practical thought is no thought of any nature, and human life no natural life.

This may seem absurd. Does not the human being eat and excrete, breed and die? Yes. But to say that this shows that human life is a certain natural life is as convincing as to argue that life is a certain chemical process on the grounds that it proceeds through chemical reactions. True, chemical reactions take place as a cell divides. But that activity of the cell lies beyond what can be understood through laws of chemistry, and it does so by virtue of the logical form of its principle. The question as to whether human life is a certain natural life is not decided by observing that humans eat and breed. The only way to answer that question is to clarify the idea of the good of practical thought.

The idea of the good is the idea of life. Yet the good known in practical knowledge is no natural goodness. That good is justice, and it is love. 'Justice' and 'love' signify life that is not natural. The life of justice negates natural life, but does so abstractly, or by abstraction. The life of love concretely and thus perfectly negates natural life; thereby it reveals itself to be the truth of life, or *the* life. However, the positive articulation of the human life, the non-natural life, *the* life, is for another occasion.

The Good as Means

We see things coming to be and ceasing to be, according to principles, mechanical or chemical, which do not reveal what happens according to these principles as good. Nor therefore as bad. Good and bad get no purchase.

But now I think 'It is good to do A because …', where doing A is a means to whatever fills the blank, which thus I represent as an end. This thought represents the end as a principle of goodness of the means I take to it: the means is good because it serves that end.

Outside its nexus to the end, the means is something's happening as it does or being as it is; good and bad do not apply. The end opens up the contrast of good and bad; it draws the means into the sphere of thought of the good.

The power of the end to turn something that is as it is into something that, being a certain way, is good, failing to be that way, bad, resides in its own, the end's, goodness. It is because and insofar as the end is good that it is a principle of the goodness of the means.

That power of the end is not a power to provide a redescription of something that, underneath this description, remains as it is. The description is a form of explanation, a form of explaining why something is as it is or happens as it does. When I am cutting a slice of bread because I am making a sandwich, then I am cutting in the way in which I am, therein cutting well, because the slice so cut makes for a good sandwich. The means's being as it is is explained by its being good, good for the end, in being that way.

I introduced means through a form of practical thought: 'It is good to do A because...'. Yet means are ordered to ends outside practical thought, too: in operations of life. What I said applies there: what outside the nexus of means to ends is something that happens as it does is turned into something that may be going well or badly. Mark the talk of error in the duplication of a chromosome.

The defining character of this form of thought is that a means is not an end, not insofar as it is a means: to represent something as a means to a certain end is not, not therein, to represent it as an end. If a means is represented as an end, then that will be a further thought. So the end is an external end: something other than what promotes it. Conversely, the means is an external means.

Here we encounter a first distortion of the idea of the good. When we limit practical thought to thought of means, then thought of something as good is the thought of it as serving an external end. That is consequentialism. (As utilitarianism, it has a further side: its determination of the good as pleasure. I turn to that later because the idea of pleasure belongs with the idea of life.)

Consequentialism is no conception of the good at all. We see this as follows. The end is something other than the means to it. Only because it is other is it able to draw the means into the sphere of the good. Yet this power of the end resides in its being good in turn. And there is no way, within the present form of thought, to comprehend the end to be good except by conceiving it as a means to a further end. Outside its nexus to a further end, the alleged end

is something that is as it is and comes to be according to principles that grant no purchase to ideas of good and bad. Within thought of external ends, there is no conceiving anything as an end in itself.

Conversely, within thought of external means, there is no conceiving something as a means in itself. For there will always be conditions under which alone a means is as it must be in order to serve the end. And when we explain why these conditions obtain according to a form of explanation that does not provide for ideas of good and bad, then we do not explain why the means is as it is by its being good. And then the end does not explain, but merely furnishes a description of something that, beneath that description, remains as it is. We think an end as an end only as we explain why the means to it is as it must be by that means's goodness. And so we do, and do only, as we understand the means to be an end, an end, then, of a further means.

Within thought of external ends, external means, nothing is represented as in itself end, nothing as in itself means. We can retain the idea of an end as an end only by conceiving it as a means. We can retain the idea of a means as a means only by conceiving it as an end. That yields a double regress, which shows that thought of means and ends is not sustained by that form of thought alone.

The Good as Life

Inner Process, Organism

This is what we saw, thinking the good as means: an end is an end only in being a means; a means is a means only in being an end. That is a double regress. It is that within thought of means. Yet we may think it again, now thinking it not through that form, but as articulating a different form. The good thought according to that different form is this: a totality in which every element is means and end, is means in being end, and end in being means. Every element of such a totality is the end of every other, and is that in being a means to every other. This is the regress returning to itself.

As the chain of means returns to itself in a circle, any condition of the purposiveness of any means is provided from within the circle. Thus the circle repeats itself, not *per accidens*, but through itself. It is the renewing of itself: rise and decline of the phoenix in every moment immediately identical.

I call this the inner process. An element of the inner process is purposive not through the work of anything external to the process, so it has no determinacy

outside its purposiveness; it is in itself means. If we call what is in itself means 'tool' or 'organ', then a totality of such means is organism. The term 'organism' so introduced is a logical term, it signifies a logical form: the inner process.

Outer Process

The inner process is called inner in distinction to the outer process. This further determines the idea of the organism: it determines the organism as body in distinction to soul.

As inner process, the organism is a totality of elements each of which is means to, and end of, each. As outer process, the organism is one not only as a unity of elements; it is one in the manner of opposing itself as a whole to what it is not. It opposes itself to what it is not by acting as a whole, realizing an end, which thus is an end of it as a whole. There is no such end in the inner process. There the organism *is* end, which end is its own means. Here the organism *has* ends, for which it requires means from what is not it. Thus the organism is twofold. It is unity of its organs as the principle of what *each of them* does. And it is unity against what it is not in what *it as a whole* does. As unity of elements, the unity is real only in its elements. As unity against what it is not, the unity is a reality of its own.

A unity of means, each of which is nothing but means, in virtue of being, as such, the end of each, I called organism. That same unity, acting as a whole against what it is not, I call animal. The term 'animal' so introduced is a logical concept signifying a logical form: the outer process.

In the outer process, the animal relates to what it is not, in such a way as to overcome that opposition, taking what it is not inside it, turning it into an element of its inner process. That relation of the animal to what it is not in the outer process is total: it is opposition to *the other*, not difference from *something other*. The animal has always already subordinated everything that it is not to itself; it relates to everything in the form of the certainty that it is a means to it, the animal. In its outer process the animal demonstrates the truth of that certainty.

The inner process is a chain of means returning to itself. The outer process returns to itself, too, but in a different way. In the outer process, the animal turns what it is not into itself in such a way as therein to reconstitute its opposition to what it is not. The animal uses itself as means, indeed, uses itself up, in such a way as, therein, to re-produce itself. The outer process repeats itself like a

task one confronts again precisely as one has discharged it. It is the renewing of itself: self-dissolution and self-production in every moment immediately identical. In the outer process, the animal acts as a whole. Therefore, it is body and soul.

A chimpanzee grasps a strawberry. In its grasp, the chimpanzee is articulated: it is torso, arm, hand. I call the parts into which an animal is articulated according to its outer process its members, in contrast to its organs, the parts into which it is articulated according to its inner process.

The chimpanzee as a whole grasps the strawberry. No part of it does, even while its members move in a coordinated way. It follows that the principle of its grasp is not the principle of any one of its parts, nor a conjunction of such principles. Its members are determined to act as they do not by any part of the chimpanzee, but by it as a whole. So the principle of the grasp of the chimpanzee, which is an act of it as a whole, is itself an act of the chimpanzee as a whole.

That act, since it is the principle of unity of the movement of its members, is not articulated, but simple. In this act, the chimpanzee is not articulated into members, nor indeed organs. In this act, the chimpanzee acts as simple unity. The act in which the animal acts as a simple unity is consciousness. The term 'consciousness', so introduced, is a logical term. It signifies a logical form: the outer process.

Sensory consciousness is perception, desire, feeling of pleasure. I will say a word about pleasure, because I will need it later. Pleasure is the consciousness of the purposiveness of the outer process for itself, its consciousness of itself as going well. That consciousness of its going well is internal to its going well. Thus pleasure is self-consciousness of the outer process, sensory self-consciousness. This is captured by Kant's definition of pleasure as the consciousness of the causality of a state to maintain itself in that state (KU, §10/AA 5, 220). The state, pleasure, has a causality that acts so as to maintain that state of pleasure, which state, as pleasure, is a consciousness of this causality, which is to say that it is self-consciousness of that state and its causality.

The animal as simple unity is soul. Wittgenstein understands this. On the one hand he remarks that a soul that is not simple would not be a soul (TLP, 5.5421). On the other hand, he says that the image of a human soul is the picture of a human being (PU, Part II, iv and BPP, §281). This also applies to chimpanzees. Seeing the soul is seeing the animal act as a whole. Therefore,

we see the soul in the articulation of the animal according to its outer process: its articulation into members. Precisely therein we understand the soul to be simple.

That does away with the mystery of consciousness. That mystery is a reflection of the attempt to think consciousness through a logical form that is inadequate to it. No description of whatever happenings in an animal's organs will ever yield comprehension of how it should be that, in virtue of those, an animal sees, hears, feels. For no part of an animal can be that through which it acts as a whole. Aristotle insists that it is the animal that sees, not any part of it, its eye, say. The point is not only that it is the animal as a whole that sees, but that seeing in particular and consciousness in general is the animal's being one and a whole. The animal as a whole sees the strawberry; the animal as a whole grasps the strawberry. It grasps it as articulated, or body; it sees it as simple, or soul. The animal in its outer process is body and soul.

Something may be good for an end an animal pursues. As that pursuit is an element of the outer process, and is pursuit of an end only as an element of this process, what is good or bad for an end of an animal therein is good or bad *for that animal*. The animal is an end.

What furthers an end that does not return to itself – an external end – is good for that end and in this sense relatively good. When something is good for an animal, it may seem that what is so good is relatively good. After all, it is good for something, for that animal. Yet that is wrong. What is good for an external end is relatively good because the representation of something as good for such an end does not provide for the comprehension of that end as good. It raises, but does not answer the question after the goodness of the end. Conversely, what is formally its own means is not relatively good. The outer process is that form of end. Hence what is drawn into it, made a term of it, is absolutely good. When we move from 'good for that end' to 'good for that animal', we do not move from one thing relative to which something may be good to another. We transcend relative goodness. The animal is an absolute end.

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The good, thought in practical thought, cannot be an external end. It must be an absolute. It may be the outer process. There are two ways of understanding the relation of the outer process to practical thought, utilitarianism and Hobbes.

The animal is an absolute end. One may think this means that it is an end that it is absolutely good to promote. Or, an animal's pleasure is an absolute end. One may think this means that it is good to bring about pleasure. Yet this is the opposite of what it means. An end one promotes is a relative end. The recognition that the animal is an absolute end is the recognition that it is not that. The idea that it is good to benefit animals and to bring it about that there be pleasure arises when the logical nexus of the animal and its pleasure to the good is apprehended, while the understanding of the good is limited to it as an external and hence relative end. Utilitarianism reduces the animal and its pleasure to a relative end of mine. As I am the shepherd of the cosmos, the cosmos is mine.

That is the first way of relating the animal and its pleasure to practical thought: as something that it is good to promote. The second way, articulated by Hobbes, represents practical thought as the self-consciousness of the outer process, indeed, as its consciousness of itself as absolute end.

The absolute goodness of pleasure is thought in practical thought not when pleasure is made the content of a practical thought that, formally, is an external end. It is thought in practical thought when the self-consciousness of that process is not only feeling, but thinking, if the consciousness in which the outer process sustains itself is not only sensory, but intellectual. This is how Hobbes conceives practical thought. We see this in three fundamental ideas of his.

The first is that a man only ever does voluntarily what is for his own good (De Cive, ch. I, VII). That means, the formal object of practical thought is what is good for her who thinks that thought. This identifies practical thought as self-consciousness of the outer process. For, what is good for the animal is, formally, that animal's outer process. So what an animal thinks, thinking what is good for it who thinks that thought, is its outer process.

Second, Hobbes presents as the first law of reason the command that one do what preserves one's life (ibid.). This says the same as the line above about voluntary action. Anything an animal does in doing which it conforms to its outer process is purposive to that process; hence in the animal's doing it the outer process is purposive to itself, and that is, preserves itself. Hobbes's law of reason thus expresses self-consciousness of the outer process.

Third, Hobbes lays it down that everyone has a natural right to everything because everything may be a means to the preservation of her life, which the

law of reason commands her to pursue (ibid., VIII–X). Now, the outer process is the animal's opposing itself to what it is not. That is a total relation, as we have seen; in it the animal relates to everything. The relation is the animal's certainty that everything is a means to itself. Hobbes's natural right is that certainty in the form of a thought.

Hobbes's law of reason, Hobbes's natural right, are practical thought understood as self-consciousness of the outer process. Its expression in language would be 'I'. This 'I' would be a concept, for it expresses what repeats itself and is always the same, over and over again. At the same time, it would be the consciousness of an individual animal. That consciousness of the individual would not be singular; it would not contrast with 'you'. Practical thought as self-consciousness of the outer process is no consciousness of a manifold with respect to which it is singular. It is solipsistic in the sense that its logical form precludes the consciousness of another. In Nagel's words, it is not a consciousness of myself as one "among others equally real" (Nagel 1978, 14). The consciousness of the fly on the part of Charly, our cat, is not a consciousness of something equally real. On the contrary, Charly is the certainty of the nothingness of the fly, the truth of which certainty she demonstrates in crushing the fly. The consciousness one human being has of another in practical thought, according to Hobbes, is like Charly's consciousness of the fly.

In order to express practical thought as understood by Hobbes we could, next to 'I', use 'the good'. Indeed, the most enlightening form of expression would be a notation that blends the words 'good' and 'I' into one another. 'I am I' means 'I am good', which means 'the good is good'. Hobbes's practical thought is self-consciousness of the animal as absolute end, and thus as the good itself.

Utilitarianism represents the animal and its pleasure as an external end. That makes no sense. Hobbes conceives practical thought as self-consciousness of the outer process. That makes sense. On that account, Hobbes's doctrine is infinitely superior to utilitarianism. Yet what Hobbes presents as the good is evil. Practical thought according to Hobbes is the certainty that I am the good; I am the true centre of what is; what is, as such, is for me. From time immemorial, that has been recognized as the expression of evil itself. Yet while we know that Hobbes expounds no idea of the good at all, but speaks the voice of evil, we do not thereby see how the good can be understood otherwise than as the outer process of life.

The Genus Process

In its outer process, the animal negates its opposition to what it is not in such a way as to re-instate that opposition: turning itself into a means, using itself up, it re-produces itself. In this way, the individual animal repeats itself in its outer process. So the outer process is the sustaining of the individual. Precisely for that reason, the coming to be of an individual animal is not a term of that process. Yet an individual animal cannot come from anything less than itself. Hence, while an animal is not made by an animal – the concept of making belongs with the outer process – an animal comes from an animal. Following Hegel, I call one animal's coming from another the genus process (Enz. / GW 20, § 35).

The appellation is apt because the process is generative: it constitutes generality. On the one hand, the process distinguishes one individual from another as one comes from *another*. Yet both are, precisely in one *coming from* the other, the same. In this way, sameness in many – generality – is constituted not by an external comparison, but by the logical character of the process. The process, by its form, distinguishes what repeats itself and remains the same from what changes and is always other: the genus from the individual.

One animal comes from another. That means, one animal ceases in another. That is one thought. The animal that – unintelligibly – gave birth but did not die, the universal mother, would not be distinguished from its genus; therefore, neither would be its offspring, which would be accidents of the universal mother, folded into her process, not individuals. This does not mean that giving birth and dying must coincide. Yet it shows why there is no obstacle to comprehending that an animal may in the moment of giving birth become nourishment for its offspring. Even where an animal goes on to live after having given birth, giving birth again, the individual expends itself in the genus process.

Just as an organ is its own means and in itself good only in and through the inner process of which it is a term, so the outer process is its own means and absolute end only in and through the genus process of which it is term. Considered in isolation, the outer process is the maintaining of itself of the individual. Yet the outer process is as such a term of the genus process, and as such a term it is consummated in generation, which is the demise of the individual. Since the individual animal is an end only as an element of the genus process, every act of an individual animal is both its preserving itself and its bringing itself to its end, and is the former in being the latter. The genus process is coming to be and ceasing to be of the individual in every moment immediately identical.

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Life is outer process, and therein it is genus process. Perhaps, then, practical thought is consciousness of – not the outer process, but – the genus process. In consciousness of the genus, the individual may transcend its practical solipsism, or evil.

We have knowledge of the genus process of animal species, for example, the leaf cutter ant. Since, in the genus process, the individual relates to another as the same as itself, the genus process is socially articulated. Thus it will be possible to say of such individuals that they act as they should, or act well, in relation to another such individual, where the meaning of 'ought' and 'good' is provided by the genus process. And thus it may be that an individual animal acts well in bringing about its own demise, and not only in those cases in which it brings itself to an end in the act of generation. It may bring about its demise in a form of defence that belongs to the genus, as is the case with certain species of ants. One may be tempted to say that, in such a case, an ant does something that is bad for it, as it dies in the process. But this is wrong, for there is no meaning to the idea of something's being good or bad for an animal outside its genus process. The individual animal has no good against its genus.

This seems to provide a way to transcend Hobbes. I may subordinate myself as individual, or outer process, to humanity, or genus process. Then the law of my practical thought is no longer Hobbes's Law of Nature, which commands that I do everything that preserves my life. Rather, my law is that I do what is purposive to the genus process. That may require that I act against what, considered outside that process, would be my good. But I have no good against my genus.

Again, there are two ways in which one may try to conceive the genus process as the good of practical thought. The first is Anscombe and Geach, the second Foot and Thompson. First Anscombe.

Promising, she maintains, is a practice by which people can get other people to do things without needing to apply force. She describes that as "an instrument in people's attainment of so many goods of common life" (Anscombe, 1969, 75), "a principle means by which human activities are promoted and human goods attained" (ibid., 76). When such a description holds true of a practice, then, she writes, it is necessary "that people should both actually adopt the procedure […] and also treat this as a *rule*" (ibid., 75); she who fails to act in accordance with such a necessity therein fails to act well.

Anscombe's description of the practice bears a form that may equally be exhibited by a description of a practice of ants through which ant activities are promoted and ant goods attained. The ant, or the human being, that acts in conformity with the practice and thus its genus process acts well in the sense Anscombe gives to that term. The meaning of 'act well' is in each case specific to a certain genus process: ants act well in doing this, human beings in doing that, both according to their genus.

An account of acting well is given, in the same form, for ants and human beings. It follows that it is not internal to such an account that it pertains to her who gives it. It follows that it does not as such determine her to act. It is no practical thought. Anscombe's concept of acting well is not the one that is my topic.

Anscombe knows this. She distinguishes two forms of necessity. She says it is necessary that people (or ants, for that matter) act in a certain way, since thereby human (ant) activities are promoted and human (ant) goods attained. Yet that this is so, she says, does not show that it is necessary to act in this way. So there is: *it is necessary that people so act*, and: *it is necessary so to act*. The second phrase expresses a necessity thought in practical thought. For it is subjectless and provides no space for a variable of which human beings or ants may be values.

After she has explained that it is necessary that human beings conform to the practice of promises, Anscombe writes: "All this, it may be said, does not prove the *necessity* of acting justly in the matter of contracts; it only shews that a man will not act well […] if he does not do so" (ibid., 75). It does not help if acting well is sanctioned by a tabu. "Not even this [that there is a tabu; SR]… proves the necessity of respecting this tabu" (ibid., 75). Again, she speaks of a necessity of respecting – in contrast to a necessity that people respect. Of that necessity, she says: "necessary […] relates to the good of the agent, not, as before, to the common good" (ibid., 75).

Now how may it be necessary to act in the way in which it is necessary that human beings act? That is, how can it be the good of the agent to act as it is necessary that people act? The only sense that, so far, we can give to the idea of the good of the agent is that afforded by the idea of outer process. And that is ruled out now, because doing what it is necessary that people do may hinder the preservation of one's life.

Anscombe thinks that a human individual can have a higher purpose than the preservation of her life:

> It is intelligible for a man to say he sees no necessity to act well in that matter, that is, no necessity […] to take contracts seriously except as it serves his purposes. But if someone does genuinely *take* a proof that without doing X he cannot act well as a proof that he must do X, then this shews […] that he *has a purpose* that can be served only by acting well, as such. (ibid., 76)

A human being can have a purpose which contains the genus process and is that through which acting in conformity with that process is, and is thought to be, good. Anscombe says nothing about what this purpose may be. She provides no indication of its logical form.

Nowadays, people here introduce the idea of value. A human being may value acting well. And she may understand that to be an objective value. That makes no sense. Either the value in question is an external end. But an external end as such is relative. Or the value is to reside in the life of her who honours that value, making it, as people are wont to say, rich and fulfilling. But then that value can only be a form of pleasure. Indeed, the values invoked are often quite transparently the finer pleasures of the well-to-do. Joseph Raz, for example, proclaims the objective value of Italian opera.

Peter Geach says the purpose of man is knowledge and love of God (Geach 1977, 21). That is better than Italian opera. Yet to understand that purpose is to know God. And therefore the formula does not help us. The formula in effect says that, did we understand the good, which contains the genus process as an essential means, we therein would know and love God. That is, the formula represents the objective of this essay as knowledge and love of God. I shall not object to that. Yet if at present our inquiry finds itself stalled, then this means we do not know nor love God.

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Now let us turn to Philippa Foot, or, more precisely, to Foot as understood and presented by Thompson. Thompson asserts that there is and can be no transition from theoretical knowledge of the genus in, *it is necessary that Fs do A*, to a practical thought: *it is necessary to do A*. Rather, a thought of the form: *it is necessary to do A*, is as such knowledge of the genus process, and vice versa. As Anscombe's step is eliminated, so is God (Thompson 2004 and Thompson 2022).

When thought of the genus is self-consciousness of the genus, then the genus is who thinks and who is thought. The subject of the thought is originally general. The practical thought is humanity thinking humanity.

The idea of a general subject of thought has got a bad name because it appears to introduce a spooky entity: in addition to you and me, there is a further subject, a super-subject, the genus. This notion must indeed be rejected, but it is a weak objection to it that a super-subject is spooky. It must be rejected because it makes the genus external to the individual. Thereby it makes it unintelligible how the individual can belong, and know herself to belong, to the genus, and thus how the genus can be a genus. What is it to me if there is, in addition to me thinking what I do, a further subject, the genus, who thinks what it thinks? A ludicrous presumption of that super-subject to suggest that it is my genus!

Humanity thinking humanity is not a further subject, other than I. In order to see this, it will help if we first consider transactional self-consciousness. Suppose I think 'I sell you this apple' and you think 'I buy this apple from you'. This is a thought for two, as Fichte puts it (Grundlage, § 3f.). I know you to think what I do, not in a separate thought about you, but in thinking what I do. And vice versa. That knowledge – my knowledge what you think, your knowledge what I think – is the self-consciousness of the thought, which thought thus is originally ours and therein is mine and yours. The subject of the thought is a pair. That pair is constituted in thought, thought of the pair as pair, which as such is thought by each of its terms. The 'I think' of the transactional thought, its self-consciousness, is 'I – you think'; it holds together in one thought the pair and its terms.

Now just as there is transactional self-consciousness, there may be generic self-consciousness. Suppose I know everyone to think what I do, not in a separate thought, but in thinking what I do; everyone knows me to think what I do, not in a separate thought, but in thinking what they do. Then that knowledge – my knowledge what everyone thinks, everyone's knowledge what I think – is the self-consciousness of the thought, which thus is originally everyone's and therein is mine. The subject of the thought is a genus. That genus is constituted in thought, thought of the genus as genus, which as such is thought by any of its members. The 'I think' of that generic thought, its self-consciousness, is an 'I – everyone think'; it holds together in one thought the genus and its members.

In the first paragraph of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant explains what a practical law is in this way: a practical law is known to bind universally (KpV, AA 5, 19). So it is internal to a practical law – it is its being a practical law – that it is known to bind. Since that belongs to its form, it is known in knowing the law. It is not a further thought I have about a practical law that people

know that law to bind them. Rather, I know that knowing the law. Thus it is right to say, unconditionally: the law is known to bind.

Kant says this before he says anything about the practical law. In this paragraph, he does no more than introduce the idea of general practical thought. He gives the idea of practical thought beyond Hobbes. Thompson asserts contra Kant that what is thought in such a thought by a human being is a certain natural life. He is with Kant, fully, in the conception of practical thought as generic self-consciousness. This introduces an incoherence.

The genus process is called thus because this process *is* the genus: the process is generative; it constitutes the genus. For it distinguishes by its form the individual from the genus, which genus therein is *its* genus and internal to the individual. Now the thought which is the self-consciousness of the genus *is* the genus; thus it is aptly called genus thought. The genus thought is generative; it constitutes the genus. For it distinguishes by its form the individual from the genus, which therein is *its* genus and internal to the individual. Yet in the genus thought the internality of genus is tighter than it is in the genus process. Here, the individual, namely, its self-consciousness, is originally the thought of its genus. As I put it: the 'I think' is 'I – everyone think'; it holds together in one thought myself and my genus. In formal mode: in the 'I' in which I speak myself as individual, I have always already spoken my genus. In material mode: I, precisely as individual, am genus.

This shows that the self-conscious genus is not a process. Its generality is not brought forth in a process that demonstrates the opposition of individual to genus by being the continuous discarding and replacement of the individuals. Rather, the generality of the self-conscious genus is constituted in thought that is the opposition of individual and genus. While the animal genus is real only in the individuals as their repetition, that is not true of the self-conscious genus. The self-conscious genus is its own reality as thought of the genus. Therefore, the individual does not need to demonstrate its generality by ceasing in another. The individual is itself genus; it needs no process for that.

Genus thought is to genus process as outer process is to inner process. The organism as inner process is a unity of organs, each of which is means to and end of each. This unity is real in the organs as the law of what each of them does. That same unity has a reality of its own as outer process, in which the animal acts as simple. The animal as simple unity is soul, and consciousness is the act in which the animal acts as simple unity. Analogously, the genus as process is the unity of individual animals each of which comes from and ceases

in another. This unity is real only in the individuals as the law of what each of them does. It has no reality of its own: in the genus process there is no act in which the genus acts as simple. By contrast, that same unity has a reality of its own as genus thought: in the practical thought of itself the genus acts as simple. The genus as simple unity is spirit; thought is the act in which the genus acts as simple unity.

What is the genus, which is the practical thought of itself? It is humanity, but this does not say much. Since the genus is the practical thought of itself, understanding what it is is self-clarification of practical thought. So we must press on. But we can already say of the genus, negatively, that it is not a certain natural life. It is not a certain life at all.

Anscombe describes the practice of promising as an element of a genus process. The form of her description is the same as that of an element of the genus process of leaf cutter ants. This character of her description settles it that the thought of the practice she expresses – her "it is necessary that people do…" – is no practical thought. For, it is internal to practical thought of the genus that she who thinks the thought belongs to the genus that she thinks. This shows that the genus thought in practical thought is no genus next to other genera. It is not a genus, but *the* genus. In this regard, it is like 'being'. 'Being' does not signify a genus next to other genera, which is why Aristotle says that being is no genus (Aristoteles 1970, 68-69; 998b22–27 and 246-247; 1053b16–24). In that same sense, humanity is no genus.

This is what is right in the objection to speciesism. The objection is confused because it comprehends practical thought to be of an external end, and the objection is to limiting that end to members of a certain species. Why care only for human beings? Is not the worm worth just as much? Not these trees and that river bank? Why should the fly's pain and the tree's mutilation count less than the pain and the mutilation of a human being? Thus I open my heart and make it wide, and make it a home for the whole of nature. That idea is boundless narcissism. She who asserts it, representing the whole of nature as her own external end, declares her benevolent will the holy centre of the universe. Yet there is something right in this. Practical thought is not partial to one species over another. It is the thought of humanity, which is no genus next to other genera and in this sense is no genus at all, no more than being is.

When we consider the practice of promising as an element of a certain genus process, then that consideration does not reveal the necessity of doing anything. Anscombe recognizes this. The description, she thinks, can enter

practical thought through an aim I may have. Without that aim, there is no answer to the following questions: Why would I sacrifice myself at the altar of the species? Why would I countenance even the slightest diminution of my comfort, so that other members of the species attain goods and are furthered in their activities? These questions are not touched by appealing to the common good, for the common good, as it is revealed in the description of the practice, is practically inert. As Anscombe explains: when we ask after the necessity of doing something, we consider the good of the agent.

This shows the superiority of Hobbes's conception of the good over the idea of the good as genus process. Since the human individual is for herself genus, she has no genus above her. She cannot bow her knee to a genus; she is not internal means in the self-renewal of a genus process. She, as individual, is the absolute end. This is registered and at the same time distorted in the thought of that end as the preservation and comfort of an animal life. The human individual is absolute because she transcends the genus process and therewith the outer process: she does not bring forth her own generality in a demise of herself in which she recovers herself, namely her genus, in another individual. This insight is inverted when the individual asserts her absoluteness in such a way as to assert herself as outer process and natural life. Therein, we noted, Hobbes describes evil itself.

The attempt to understand the good of practical thought – the attempt to understand human life – through the logical form of the genus process fails because the genus thought in practical thought is no process. The good I think in practical thought is no animal life, no life of the flesh. It is the life of the spirit. That life is no genus next to other genera; it is not a life, but *the* life.

Is human life, the life of the spirit, another life than animal life, a life of the flesh? This is like asking: is the soul another thing than the body? What is always other in the inner process comes to be and ceases to be in eternal repetition (cells of my skin fall off and give way to new ones), is one and remains in the outer process in which the animal acts as simple and therefore as a whole. Analogously, what is always other in the genus process, comes to be and ceases to be in eternal repetition (individuals die and give birth to others), is one and remains in the genus thought, in which the genus acts as simple and therefore as a whole. The act in which the genus acts as a whole, human life, is no genus process. The act in which the genus acts as simple relates to the genus process as animal consciousness relates to its inner process: the unity of the inner process in its truth is the simple unity of consciousness. In the same way, every

relation of human being to human being in which they are terms in a genus process – parents to children, sister to brother, fellow to fellow in work – in its truth is the simple activity of the genus.

The act in which the animal acts as a whole is in turn a process, for it is opposition: of the animal to its world. The act in which the genus acts as a whole may in turn be a process, if it is opposition. Unfolding this opposition and its process, the life of the spirit, would be to speak of right and wrong, guilt and forgiveness, good and evil. But I must stop now.
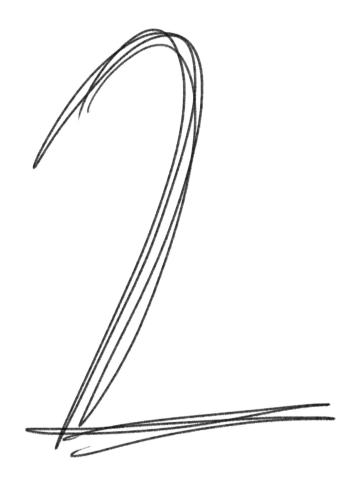
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Abbreviations

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Enz / GW 20   Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1992: *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* [1830]. In: *GW 20* (ed. Bonsiepen, Wolfgang and Lucas, Hans Christian). Hamburg: Meiner

KpV / AA 5   Kant, Immanuel, 2003: *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* [1788]. Hamburg: Meiner [quoted according to the pagination of the fifth volume of the Academy Edition].

KU / AA 5   ——, 2009: *Kritik der Urteilskraft* [1790]. Hamburg: Meiner [quoted according to the pagination of the fifth volume of the Academy Edition].

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Part Two
The Logic and Particularity of Evil

CHAPTER FIVE

Individuality of Reason
On the Logical Place of the Evil in Kant and Hegel[*]

Zdravko Kobe

In Kant, morality stands for a special kind of obligation, that binds finite rational beings simply by virtue of their being rational. But while the word is widely used, it is far from obvious that morality in this sense exists at all. If we assume that we have certain inclinations or ends, it is easy to see that, as rational beings, we may be obliged to perform certain actions – those that, all things considered, are the best means to realize the ends in question. This is thus *practically necessary* or *good* for us. The problem is that this notion of goodness is only relative, conditioned on pre-given ends, and that consequently nothing can count as inherently good. It seems that within the limits of reason alone there is no place for unconditional practical necessity, and that morality is but a word.

The main goal of the *Critique of Practical Reason* is to show that this is not the case.[1] Kant's argument to this effect is contained in what can be called the

[1] The declared purpose of the *Critique of Practical Reason* is "to show that *there is pure practical reason*" (AA 5, 3). Kant specified it as follows: "The first question here, then, is whether pure reason of itself alone suffices to determine the will or whether it can be a determining

second Copernican turn: After having tried in vain to determine the content of the good *a priori* and formulate the moral law accordingly (namely: You ought to do the good!), let us try to formulate the moral law first and then determine the good accordingly. The content of the good would then emerge as a by-product of acting on the moral law. Note that in this account Kant does not abandon the instrumental model of action altogether, since every deed still involves an end, a purpose, it tries to realize. But it now becomes decisive that the deed was not done because of this end. Why, then? As reason is universally valid, we know that it cannot bind anyone without binding all at the same time. Therefore, if, in a given situation, it turns out that not all rational beings can act in the same way, then the deed in question could not have been rational and must have been grounded on an empirical inclination. For a deed to be rational in the strict sense, it must be such that any rational being could act in the same way. This is the highest command of reason and the ultimate ground of morality. To act morally is to act in the place of all rational beings, or more simply, to act rationally.

I think this is a legitimate way to formulate Kant's fundamental idea of *autonomy* as a distinctive articulation of freedom, subjectivity, and reason. For it is reason, I think, that commands the concept of autonomy in Kant. It is reason that enjoys this sovereign privilege of accepting nothing but what it itself validates. This is why there is also no paradox of autonomy in Kant, since autonomy does not refer to the jurisdiction of a particular rational subject, but to the autonomy of universally valid reason in an individual.[2] By accepting the binding force of the moral law, the subject merely acknowledges that she is rational. It is true that this act is an act of freedom, which one can only perform in person. No one can be forced to make such a choice. At the same time, however, no one has also the freedom to choose against it, since by not acknowledging the validity of the moral law one would have excluded oneself from the realm of rational subjects. It is only by subjecting herself to the

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ground of the will only as empirically conditioned" (AA 5, 15). There is some disagreement regarding what exactly "to determine the will" stands for; but it is clear that Kant argues against Hume for whom "reason is, and ought to only be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (Hume 1960, 415). – The authors of the Classical German Philosophy are cited according to the volumes and paginations in the established reference editions, that is *Akademie-Ausgabe* for Kant (AA), *Gesamtasugabe* or *Sämmtliche Werke* for Fichte (GA/SW), *Sämmtliche Werke* für Schelling (SW), and *Gesammelte Werke* for Hegel (GW).

2   On the alleged paradox of autonomy in Kant, see S. Rödl (2011). For a different version of the paradox that explores the very tension between the universality of reason and the particularity of a finite rational being, see Böhm (2021).

universal moral law that she constitutes herself as subject of thinking and doing in the first place. The rational subject is inherently a moral subject.

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Building on this idea of autonomy, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*[3] Kant developed a comprehensive system of morality which is still the mandatory starting point for any discussion of the good. A brief examination shows, however, that his account is afflicted with serious limitations that are closely related to his formal, abstract, and ultimately defective conception of reason. In saying this, I am not referring so much to the usual charge against the formality of the moral law, at least not in its usual formulation. In Kant, formality is an openly acknowledged condition we are bound to accept if, given the impossibility to determine an *a priori* content for the idea of the good, we still want pure reason to be practical. The problem is, rather, that in the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant conceives of reason as an *accomplished*, *self-enclosed* and *self-identical* realm of universal validity that in a sense stands in an *external* relation to rational subjects. These, for their part, can only *subsume* themselves under it. The so-called formality of the moral law thus merely points to a structural weakness that lies in Kant's overall conception of reason.[4]

This problem manifests itself, I think, in at least three points. The first is the *emptiness* or *indeterminacy of the good*. In Kant, reason commands categorically, with the supreme force of the moral law. But when, in a concrete situation of moral action, we ask ourselves what it is that reason so unconditionally demands, we find ourselves unable to proceed to an immanent specification of the duty. The universalization test that Kant designed to this effect in the typical case fails to deliver a useful demarcation line between

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3   To a lesser extent also in the *Groundwork*. In contrast to the prevailing view, we believe that in Kant it is impossible to speak of a single stable and coherent doctrine of morality that would be defended throughout his (critical) career. On the contrary, it is our contention that Kant's conception of morality was subject to constant, often substantial modifications, provoked by both internal deficiencies and external criticism. We also believe that the most promising version of Kant's system of morality is to be found in the first *Critique* and the *Groundwork*. Under "Kant's morality", we are consequently going to refer to the system presented in these two works – and *not* to the one contained in the *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* or the *Metaphysics of Morals*!

4   A similar critique of Kant's formalism is proposed by Ganzinger in this volume: "the unfolded formalism charge concerns *the contradiction in the will test* because it contains a tension between Kant's insistence on acting from duty for the sake of duty, and the requirement to act on a particular, obligatory end" (2024, 49). See also Knappik (2013, 102ff.).

the permitted and the prohibited, since it crucially depends on how the situation under consideration is described, and at least from the systemic point of view, no other criterion seems to be at hand.[5] Instead of giving a useful instruction on what reason requires us to do, it serves in effect as a convenient device to present almost every possible action as demanded by reason. This indeterminacy goes hand in hand with the fact that, oddly enough, there also seems to be *no space for a genuine moral conflict* in Kant.[6] Reason not only commands categorically, allegedly it also commands univocally, so that even a person "of the most common understanding" (AA 5, 27) or "a child some eight or nine years old" (AA 8, 286) is considered capable of telling without hesitation what their duty is. In this, Kant flatly contradicts the most common feature of *conditio humana*. But what is truly perplexing about it is the fact that Kant, who once shocked the learned public by claiming that there was a necessary illusion at the very heart of reason and who proved so attentive to the unavoidable contradictions in its theoretical use, now maintains that, in its practical use, no real illusion, let alone contradiction, can emerge.[7] This may indicate that, in the field of practical philosophy, Kant actually moderated the radicality of his critical breakthrough and backtracked to a much more traditional conception of reason.

The second point is *the anonymity of the subject*. According to Kant's view, the moral subject cannot but subject herself to the demands of reason. In this respect, Kant's notion of freedom is again the exact opposite of the so-called freedom of choice. But since reason is inherently universal, the Kantian subject is required to *renounce* that which is *particular to her*, to be universal *against* her particularity, to make herself into the willing instrument of the universal in its abstract purity. This line of thought is further emphasized by Kant's insistence that, in order to count as "moral", a deed must be done not

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5   The objection was brought to its poignant formula in Hegel's dictum "property, if it is property, must be property" (GW 4, 437). For the standard Hegelian diagnosis of the "*empty formalism*", see the *Elements of Philosophy of Right*: "From this point of view, no immanent theory of duties is possible" (GW 14, § 135R, 118). In the *Groundwork,* Kant proposed alternative formulations of the test, including one that refers to the notion of self-end. Yet from the systematic point of view, they must all be equivalent to the formula in the typic.

6   Again, our affirmation refers to the initial outline of Kant's moral theory as defined above.

7   It is true that Kant speaks of a "natural dialectic" in relation to practical reason, in the sense of "a propensity to rationalize against those strict laws of duties and to cast doubt upon their validity" (AA 4, 406). In this case, however, natural dialectic refers to the most common propensity of human nature, which often seeks excuses for not doing what reason commands. As such, it stands for the conflict between reason and sensual inclinations and has nothing in common with the natural dialectic of the first *Critique* that it is inherent to *reason* itself.

only in accordance with the moral law, but (solely) for the sake of it, out of respect for the moral law. In this way nothing remains in a deed that would belong to this *particular* subject. It is hardly surprising that Kant's moral law was compared to a tyrant who not only demands total submission,[8] but also anonymity.[9]

The third critical point is, finally, *the impossibility of the evil*. Again, the problem is straightforward. If to act morally is to act rationally, out of respect for the moral law, and if this is the only way to think of freedom positively, a series of equations follow that bind freedom to morality. Free will becomes just another name for the causality of reason. On this model, it is then trivial to explain what a morally good deed is: it is simply a deed in which reason has manifested its causal efficacy. In infinite rational beings this is obviously always the case, since in them practical necessity directly and inevitably results in actual willing, so that it is inappropriate to speak of an ought. In completely rational beings, evil is impossible. In the case of finite rational beings, on the other hand, we must consider that the causality of reason must impose itself against the obstacles of existing sensible inclinations, so that it may or may not produce the respective deed. Here, the good may fail to materialize. But it is important to see that even here, in finite rational beings, the conceptual relation between the causality of reason and the moral deed remains the same as in the case of the infinite ones. "For this 'ought' is strictly speaking a 'will' that holds for every rational being", Kant observes, "under the conditions that reason in him is practical without hinderance" (AA 4, 449). For our present purposes, we can leave aside the question of how the pathological inclinations infringe upon the causality of reason, and what exactly the mechanism of their interaction is. The important thing is that, on this model, the finite rational subject turns out to be capable of *good deeds only*. What appears to be a bad

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8   It makes little difference, Hegel used to note, whether such a command comes from outside or from inside, for in both cases it functions as an alien instance demanding total self-suppression. But the idea itself was hardly peculiar to Hegel, it was also formulated by Jacobi or Schiller. The latter spoke of "a dark and monkish ascetism".

9   Note that even a benevolent reading of Kant's position leads to a similar conclusion. For even if we understand Kant's moral law along the lines of the highest principle of theoretical cognition, that is, in the sense of necessary conditions of the unity of willing of a finite rational being, this still requires a predetermined and exclusively universal mode of action. True, in this case, the starting point would be particular to each individual subject, determined by her given inclinations; however, from there on she would be required to act in a completely universal way. In her "self-constitution" she would be guided by the idea of fully rational agent. There would be nothing that would allow her to stick to her individuality. This applies *mutatis mutandis* also to Korsgaard's constituivist reading of Kant's morality.

deed does not really belong to her at all, it rather indicates that in this case the forces of nature prevailed.

It may seem that the evil is to that extent reduced to a privative notion, in the sense that it serves merely as a common name for the inevitable limitedness of the good. *There is more*, though. According to Kant, only an act of freedom, which starts a new causal chain in the world, can be properly called a deed, as opposed to an event that merely prolongs the existing causal chain according to the immutable laws of nature. What seems to be amoral or evil is, consequently, *no deed at all*, it is just a natural event. Therefore, if an action is rational or autonomous, it is indeed a free action, and good; but if it is not produced in this way, if it is not free, then it is *no deed at all*, and therefore *cannot be evil*. An evil deed is a contradiction in terms.[10] Since good and evil can be properly attributed only to deeds, there can be no evil in the world, only good.

<p style="text-align:center">⁕</p>

All three points – the indeterminacy of the good, the anonymity of the subject, and the impossibility of the evil – are closely related. They all have their origins Kant's conception of reason, which in the field of the practical remained rather traditional.[11] They were also all promptly noticed by Kant's contemporaries who formulated a series of critical remarks on their behalf. In each case, they had a major effect on subsequent development of Classical German Philosophy. But since it was the issue of evil that provoked the most agitated controversy, we will try to trace the difference that separates Kant and Hegel along these lines.[12]

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10   "This would then mean", Prauss resumes (1983, 81), "that there is either a morally good action or no action at all, and consequently also no [merely] legal, let alone morally evil action."

11   Hegel, too, attributed the inability to think of the evil to the prevailing abstract thought. "The difficulty of deducing the origin of the evil arises from the abstraction of understanding which assumes the concept of the will as something positive that is completely identical to itself" (GW 26,2, 902).

12   The paradox in question is aptly illustrated by Kant's attempt to define the evil in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. There, the good and the evil are treated in parallel, as the two "objects of pure practical reason", with the obvious intention of obtaining an appropriate definition for the good as "a necessary object of the faculty of desire" and then extending it accordingly to the evil. The latter is thus explained as "a necessary object of the faculty of aversion […] in accordance with the principle of reason" (AA 5, 58). Therein, however, it is difficult to understand what the faculty of aversion stands for, and how it could possibly determine its object "in accordance with the principle of reason". For if the good cannot be determined *a priori*, but only emerges as a consequence of acting out of respect for the moral law, that is, of the causality of

As early as 1788, the very same year as the *Critique of Practical Reason* was published,[13] some authors, e.g. Ulrich or Schmid, observed that according to Kant "to act freely, autonomously and morally good are synonyms" (Schmid 1788, 62). Immediately, there was also a clear understanding that such identity would have highly problematic implications for the possibility of the evil, so that various "friends of critical philosophy" felt obliged to propose their own solution.

First among them was Carl Christian Ehrhard Schmid, who basically transferred the notion of limitation from the empirical realm to the intelligible one. On Kant's account, the immoral deeds were typically explained with the limited power of reason in the subject's empirical character (or, alternatively, with the strength of the empirical obstacles). To avoid the obvious conclusion that position led to, Schmid suggested that the weakness of the subject's empirical character might be interpreted as an *adequate* expression of her *intelligible* character that, somehow, was limited as well. According to Schmid's proposal, the subject can still be considered the author of an immoral deed because the very fact that, in a given case, empirical inclinations overpowered the relative weakness of reason was ultimately grounded in her intelligible character, and even if she did not freely choose it and it is impossible to explain why it is limited the way it is, this intelligible character constitutes what, as a finite rational being, she is. Schmid was thus able to explain a genuine possibility of evil deeds and the fact that a finite rational being may have an individual character of her own.[14] The problem was, however, that the place for freedom as autonomy was lost along the way. One's intelligible character was simply

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reason, then evil is a necessarily empty concept. The fact that this is the only place in the entire opus where Kant speaks of "the faculty of aversion", the *Verabscheuungsvermögen*, illustrates Kant's inability to find a logical place for the evil within his original account of morality. In later works, especially in the *Religion*, Kant paid much closer attention to the evil. However, it is our contention, first, that he did it precisely because his original conception of morality proved unable to accommodate for the possibility of the evil, and second, that he did so at the cost of making his moral theory deeply inconsistent with the original account.

13   For an excellent account of both the conceptual and historical background that determined the discussion of the evil in the years following the *Critique of Practical Reason*, see Noller (2016).

14   Admittedly, Schmid's proposal somewhat transposed the problem, since by relying on the distinction between the empirical and the intelligible character he mobilized conceptual tools of the first *Critique*, not the second one. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant occasionally equated the intelligible character with reason (cf. KrV, A556/B584), but in his account, reason was usually assumed to be universal. Schmid, who explicitly questioned the capacity of reason to be the cause of irrational actions (1792, 336), thus succeeded in drawing attention to the complex question of the *individuality of reason*.

attached to the individual without her participation or consent, and once given, was bound to produce its inevitable *moral* effects. In the system of the *intelligible fatalism*, as Schmid's position was called, there was no space for self-determination, not even in the intelligible sphere that in Kant at least offered a refuge from the necessity of nature. Hence Schmid's system was generally rejected as a remedy worse than the disease itself.[15]

Karl Leonhard Reinhold, for his part, understood the need to ground the origin of evil in the free activity of the individual subject. He therefore proposed to severe the bond between free will and practical reason that in his view constituted the real source of Kant's problem.[16] On Reinhold's proposal, presented in many variations from 1792 on, it is of decisive importance to distinguish between theoretical and practical reason. In its theoretical function, reason merely serves to coordinate the pathological inclinations, ideally to their maximum possible satisfaction condensed under the notion of happiness. In contrast, in its practical function it establishes the fundamental moral law that binds rational subjects in complete independence of any given inclination. It is not difficult to see that in its different functions reason may lead in different directions and point to different actions. So, while on Kant's account will is nothing but practical reason, Reinhold claimed that in neither of its functions can reason produce an actual willing. For that to happen, an *additional* decision or resolve (*Entschluß*) is needed, which must give its consent to the one or the other proposition of reason and translate it into an actual deed. "In *all* willing, but also *only* in *proper willing*, the act of appetition, which always occurs thereby, is different from the act of *resolve*, the *fondness* from the *deciding*" (Reinhold 1794, II, 218). Both the possibility of evil as well as individual self-determination were thus saved. For while the act of appetition is a "non-voluntary striving that occurs in the person", the act of resolve consists in a voluntary manifestation "*not in* the person, but *of the person herself*" (Reinhold 1794, II, 218). In this way, an action can indeed be said to be freely caused by this individual person. But the price Reinhold was forced to pay for this

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15   Schmid was fiercely attacked by Fichte, who did not refrain from personal insults that ended in an "act of annihilation" (see GA I,3, 255/W 2, 457).

16   In a letter to Baggesen from 28. 3. 1792, Reinhold observes: "[Schimd's] assertion: that a man acts freely only in the ethical, but not in the unethical actions, that he is inevitably determined to the latter ones, infuriates me to the utmost. Nevertheless, I must admire the perspicacity he has expended on it. His *proton pseudos* is the Kantian concept of *willing* as the causality of reason; from which it follows, of course, that if morality is the *action of reason*, then the immorality cannot be the action of reason, and consequently, since only the actions of reason should be free, it also cannot be free" (Baggesen 1831, 169).

was huge, since as an arbitrary decision the act of resolve was *excluded* from the space of reason. As in the black box, it is impossible to explain on what grounds the subject might decide to give precedence to theoretical reason, that is to sensual inclinations. Or more precisely, once the act of resolve was separated from reason, it turned into a completely arbitrary power of choice. One may safely say that in this way Reinhold fell below the standards set by Kant with his notion of autonomy.

Finally, the paradox of heteronomous deeds eventually prompted Kant, too, to proceed to a complete overhaul of his theory. Naturally, and in line with his usual practice, he gave little or no indication of the extent to which his position had changed. This may explain, at least in part, how it is still possible to treat Kant's practical philosophy as a homogenous construction, as if no development took place after its first presentation in the *Groundwork*, and as if Kant did not introduce some major modifications into the very infrastructure of his system, which are in a blatant contradiction with his initial stance.[17] Be that as it may, we agree with Noller (2016, 184) that Kant's theory of radical evil presented in the *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* was his reaction to the challenge raised by Schmid's intelligible fatalism and the problem of evil in general.

In his new conception of action, Kant essentially combined elements of Schmid and Reinhold in a novel way.[18] In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant basically relied on a hydraulic model of interaction between the inclinations, so that reason had to acquire an incentive of its own in order to overpower pathologic inclinations on their proper sensible terrain. This was the function of the moral feeling as an *a priori* product of reason. In the *Religion*, Kant instead introduced a special instance between the inclinations and the deed that was now needed to give its approval to the incentive, whatever its relative strength, and transform it into an effective deed. This intermediate instance is *Willkühr*, or power of choice, that was now the ultimate causal ground of the

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17   In the recent scholarship, this has started to change. Ortwein observes that "unity and inner coherence are presumed in Kant's argumentation, which are nowhere to be found in him" (1987, 145), while Noller asks "whether the real 'myth' consists rather in thinking of Kant's theory as an a priori immutable system" (2016, 43). For Kervégan, all the evidence suggests that "between 1785 and 1793 the centre of gravity of [Kant's] practical philosophy *shifted from the will to the power of choice*" (2016, 56). Indeed, if in the *Groundwork* free will was virtually identical to practical reason, in the *Religion* and the *Metaphysics of Morals* only the power of choice was declared to be free in the proper sense.

18   While Schmid's influence is certain, it appears that Reinhold and Kant developed their respective solutions independently; see Noller (2016, 208).

action and the true locus of freedom. "No incentive can determine the *power of choice* to action unless the human being has incorporated it into her maxim" (AA 6, 23–24). An evil deed now clearly implies an evil maxim. But how and on what grounds could a rational being possibly adopt an evil maxim? Since according to general apprehension this could not be done directly, for the evil's sake, Kant devised a subtle procedure to make it possible obliquely. In his view, which on this point was close to Reinhold's, there are actually two systems of practical reason in a finite rational being, one based on the principle of happiness, the other based on the principle of morality. As they are both inherent to a finite rational being, they must *both be upheld*, Kant maintains, the question is only how to arrange *their respective hierarchy* in one's system of maxims. According to Kant, this can be again determined only by the subject's free deed. But since this self-determination must refer to the subject's intelligible character, Kant introduced the notion of an *"intelligible deed"* – a deed performed in a transcendental past (that is a past that was never present), by which every one of us *originally* determined our own intelligible character. If in this intelligible deed we have given precedence to the principle of universal morality (or, love) we are good; but if we have *perverted* the proper order and preferred the principle of our happiness (or, self-love) we are evil! As the intelligible character is unknown to us, we can never tell what our true nature is. However, sober observation led Kant to conclude that in the intelligible deed we had determined ourselves to cherish our particular self over universal morality, and that, consequently, we were born with an inherent propensity to the evil.

It is quite clear that, in the *Religion*, Kant started from the fact of the evil and tried to provide an *a priori* deduction of the Protestant, and more specifically Pietist, religious doctrine.[19] In this respect, his theory of radical evil can even be considered successful. As for his general theory of morality, however, we are bound to recognize that it is fatally flawed. For not only is the intelligible deed inscrutable, *unerforschlich*, as Kant openly admitted – so that our fate had been sealed without our knowledge – the real problem is that, as in Reinhold, the original deed can be only explained as an *arbitrary* decision which *cannot* be justified by reason. As in the story of Adam seduced by Eve, who herself was seduced by the snake, Kant's theory of radical evil is there just to *conceal* that it does *not* explain the radix of evil. But while Kant clearly failed in his

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19   For example, the idea that we could somehow reverse our original choice and transform ourselves into subjects of the good – an idea that is in blatant contradiction with Kant's ontology – is, I think, but a speculative version of the so-called *Wiedergeburt* that played a major role in Pietism. On the presence of Pietist motifs in Kant's moral theory, see Kobe (2018).

attempt at finding a logical place for the evil, we will see that by his insistence on the relation between the universal and the particular he did touch a point that would prove decisive.

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In the years that followed, many authors joined the debate, Fichte and Schelling included. Fichte's major contribution consisted, I think, in that he provided a new understanding of what it meant for pure reason to be practical. Whereas Kant, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, was ultimately trying to find a piece of empirical reality that could serve as the efficient cause of a moral deed, and allegedly discovered it in the moral feeling, Fichte claimed that reason's being practical could not consist in the existence of a particular cause in nature, but in a specific mode in which a rational being exists. According to Fichte, an existing rational being is a being in contradiction: as rational it is independent and infinite, and as existing it is dependent and finite. Because of this contradiction, there is always a striving within it to overcome itself: this is what "practical" stands for. Being practical is simply the mode of existence of a finite rational being. However, and despite the fact that the *Thathandlung* and the concomitant insistence on the self-determining *Gewissen* provided the necessary conceptual tools, Fichte, at least in his Jena period, continued to treat reason in a rather traditional way, similar to Kant, which ultimately prevented him from treating the issue seriously. When, in the *System of Ethics*, he addressed the "cause of the evil in the finite rational being", he thus tried to explain it away simply by the fact that one can "render obscure" the otherwise clear consciousness of what the duty demands. For which, according to Fichte, one is to bear full responsibility, as indeed "it is up to our freedom whether such consciousness [of what the duty demands] continues or becomes obscured" (GA I,5, 177/W 4, 192).[20]

Schelling, for his part, argued strongly that the real and living concept of freedom must include the real possibility of the evil.[21] In the *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* he therefore proposed two profound modifications in the prevailing ontological and conceptual framework: first, he opened up an inner incongruity within the absolute by distinguishing "that in God that is not *He Himself*" (SW 7, 369); and second, with reference to

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20   For a more sympathetic reading, see James (2021).

21   Shelling was perfectly aware of the paradox of heteronomous acts, whereupon "evil is completely abolished" (SW 7, 371).

finite rational beings, he introduced the concept of a "derived absoluteness" (SW 7, 347). On this basis, Schelling was able to reclaim Kant's duality of the principles from the *Religion* in a much more conclusive way. Following Kant, he claimed that the evil has its origin in the affirmation of the subject's particular self against the universal. But in a profoundly transformed ontological and conceptual environment, he could now combine the two complementary deficiencies – that of the absolute and that of the finite – to provide a positive logical ground for the possibility of the evil. Unfortunately, we cannot explore Schelling's conception in more detail here.[22] Suffice to say that it is quite probable that Hegel was familiar with it and that it was under its influence that he developed his own mature conception of the evil.

Regarding Hegel, to whom we shall finally turn, it is interesting to note that in his Jena period the concept of the evil was treated in a limited and rather incidental way. This is true even of the *Phenomenology*. For although in the final stage of the spirit the evil explicitly appears in the title of a section, its presentation is, both in its emphasis and its conceptual setting, clearly embedded in the general project of introduction to the speculative science. The *Phenomenology*'s transitory treatment could therefore hardly be mistaken for Hegel's "theory of the evil". But if we pay due attention to the specific context, we can gain some valuable indications of what his position was. First, Hegel introduces the issue of evil with reference to the figure of conscience, the *Gewissen*, which in turn has been brought about by the inconsistencies of Kantian (and Fichtean) morality. In order to act according to the demands of morality, Hegel argues, a self-conscious I would have to obtain sufficient insight into the conditions of action and test various maxims. But since no amount of objective knowledge would ever suffice, and since specific duties necessarily conflict with each other, the process of selection would never lead to a univocal deed that reason itself commands us to perform. Indeed, a completely "moral" consciousness would remain inactive "– *or*, if action does take place, one of ˛the conflicting duties would actually be violated" (GW 9, 342). It is at this point that Hegel introduces the figure of conscientious consciousness.[23] Having learned the lesson that it is impossible to act according to the strict demands of morality and being aware of the necessity to act, conscience

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22   For a good presentation, see Gardner (2017).

23   Contemporary models are Fichte and Jacobi. In his *Alwill*, the latter revealed the paradoxes of acting according to the rules of morality, noting that in certain situations, it is only moral "to act right against them" (Jacobi 1994, 470). For a dedicated account of conscience in Hegel, including the crucial distinction between "formal" and "actual" or "true conscience", see Moyar (2011).

now decides for itself what the content of the good in the given situation is. In the absence of objectively compelling reasons, it relies on its personal conviction, and in this certainty it "knows and does what is concretely right". Hence, says Hegel, "only conscience is moral *acting* as acting" (GW 9, 343). But it would be a miscomprehension to regard conscience as a mysterious cognitive faculty that somehow extends the scope of rational knowledge or makes us know what reason cannot. In fact, the conscientious conscience has no better knowledge than the moral one. It is "fully aware" of the inherently conflicting nature of the duties and "knows that it is not acquainted with the case" according to the terms of the universality demanded by it (GW 9, 346). Its decisive advantage over moral consciousness is rather that, in its view, "its incomplete knowing, because it is *its own* knowing, counts for it as sufficiently complete knowing" (GW 9, 346). Conscience knows, that is, that in a concrete situation of action it is impossible to deduce what is to be done according to the universal rules of reason; but, faced with the necessity to act, "it knows that it has to choose" nonetheless. In short, it stands for a rational subject who, fully aware of the inconsistency of reason, assumes the burden of determining the good on its own. It is a subject who supplements the deficiencies of the universal with its own particularity. To act is to step out, Hegel remarked, to step out into the void.

This gap between a particular rational subject and the universal space of reason opens up the formal condition of the possibility of the evil. In order to understand how it is actualized, we must consider, secondly, that in the *Phenomenology* Hegel also presented an elaborate theory of action that differed considerably from Kant's. For Hegel, on the one hand, action is inherently expressive, it manifests, even constitutes the nature of its author. "What the subject is, is the series of its actions", Hegel later remarked (GW 14, § 124, 110). On the other hand, for him, the purpose of an action is "the purpose actualized". In general, we act in order to give objective existence to something that initially exists only in the subject. Accordingly, the effects an action produces in the empirical world are immanent to the action itself, they constitute its soul, and cannot be separated from it. But since action is inherently universal, inscribed in the space of reason, it cannot achieve its purpose (that is, "the purpose actualized") in the objectivity of mere empirical facts, but needs an objectivity that is itself universal, the objectivity of intersubjective recognition. In the famous section on the "spiritual kingdom of animals" Hegel accordingly drew on the model of artistic production and presented an action as a "true work" (GW 9, 222) that is a common work "of all and everyone" (see GW 9, 227). If we now

apply this model to the conscience considered above, it is not difficult to see why its action is bound to fail, and instead of realizing the good, it is necessarily condemned as evil.

> The others thus do not know whether this conscience is morally good or evil; or instead, not only can they not know this, they must also take it to be evil. (GW 9, 350)

We have seen that the deed performed by a conscientious consciousness is not warranted by reason. It can therefore turn out to be good or evil, depending in effect on whether or not the others would recognize the proposed determination. But why should they recognize it? Since the conscientious subject has affirmed its particular self, it is only to be expected that others, in judging its action, would also affirm *their* particular selves. That is, they will take it to be evil.

As already noted, the treatment of evil in the *Phenomenology* was no systematic presentation. In the conflict of interpretation considered above Hegel eventually revealed both sides as evil and thus finally established a community of complete equality. But again, if we disentangle the above account from the overall project of the *Phenomenology*, a series of valuable indications emerge. For Hegel, the space of reason is obviously riddled with opacities and internal tensions. Not only are there *genuine conflicts* in the field of action, in which reason cannot dictate or deduce what is the right thing to do, but it can also happen that *both* options are *wrong*. We should add that something similar applies to the field of thought as well, where reason can end up in *real contradictions* – in contradictions, that is, that do not arise from an error or neglect, but are a necessary product of reason. In such situations, reason must take on a concrete shape, and to determine what to do or think, the subject must *go beyond* what is justified by "merely logical" reasons and *decide* for itself.[24] In Hegel, then, reason is inherently *subjectivized*. And by this we do not mean merely that every thought implies a subject thinking it (as in Kant, where the I think must 'accompany' all my thoughts). It means, on the contrary, that thinking cannot proceed in a quasi-mechanical way according to the formal laws of logic, but in order to overcome its gaps and bumps, necessarily involves an instance of the subject's particularity. Let us say that in Hegel (speculative) thinking becomes something inherently *personal*. The particular subject is a positivation of the inherent incongruity of reason itself, of the *excess* of reason over itself. The place of the subject, which ultimately exists as a determinate,

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24   In the final methodological considerations in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel speaks here of 'a turning point of the method' (GW 12, 247), which corresponds to the subjectivization of thinking.

individual subject, is inscribed in the very concept of reason, it is one and the same concept. However, given that in thinking (and acting) the rational subject actualizes both *reason and itself*, both its own particularity and the universality of reason, there is always a real possibility that the two will not overlap. In the case of conscientious consciousness, the *Phenomenology* presented this discrepancy under the guise of a subject's action that fails to be recognized by other subjects. But since it is reason itself that is characterized by such self-distance, the evil cannot be simply a matter of empirical failure – it is inscribed in the very fabric of reason. The logical origin of the evil, then, lies in the essential subjectivity of reason, or, alternatively, in the constitutive self-distance between the universal and the particular.

With these considerations in mind, we can now approach Hegel's systematic treatment of the subject in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, in which the idea of the good is introduced as follows:

> The *good* is the idea, as the unity of the *concept* of the will and the *particular* will. (GW 14, § 129, 114)

Hegel begins with the *distinction* between the universal and particular. The good is a formal concept of what is to be done, and as an idea it includes a movement of its self-realization in the guise of the particular (or subjective) will. The particular will ought to do what is to be done, that is, do the good; but since it is particular, and since it has an absolute right to its particularity,[25] it is up to it to *determine* what is to be done. Hegel says:

> In the vanity of all otherwise valid determinations and in the pure inwardness of the will, the self-consciousness is both the possibility to make its principle *the universal in and for itself*, as well as the *arbitrariness* to make into its principle its *own particularity* over the universal, and to realize it by its acting – to be *evil*. (GW 14, § 139, 121)

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25 Hegel speaks of "the right of *subjective freedom*" – "the right of subjects particularity to find its satisfaction" (GW 14, 110, § 124R) – or of "the right of the *subjective will*" that "whatever it is to recognize as valid should be *perceived* by it as *good*" (GW 14, 115, § 132). He sees in this right the infinite difference that separates antiquity from modernity. In the Greek ethical world, the particular subject was in immediate unity with the ethical substance and had no right against it; there was "no protesting there". It was only with Christianity (and the French Revolution) that "the higher estrangement" was established where "everyone knows his *self as such* as the essence, comes to this obstinacy to be, [even] separated from the existing universal, absolute nonetheless" (GW 8, 262). In Hegel's view, however, this right of subjective particularity not only characterizes a new, more advanced epoch of world history, but at the same time corresponds better to the speculative concept. Or rather, modernity stands higher precisely because it corresponds more closely to the inner form of the concept.

Like Schelling, and perhaps under his influence, Hegel describes the situation of choosing in analogy to Kant's intelligible deed. In both cases the subject must determine the proper relationship between the universal and particular. In Kant, however, the choice is simple and clear, so that it is *rationally impossible* to pervert the proper hierarchy and give preference to the particular over the universal. In Hegel, on the other hand, reason alone cannot teach us what the right thing to do would be. We have already seen in Hegel's exposition of conscience why this is so. And here too he declares in this sense that "the conscience […] is essentially this: to be on the verge of turning into the *evil*" (GW 14, § 139R, 121).

But here Hegel also explains why this is necessarily so with a reference to the very logical structure of concrete acting and thinking. In the situation of choice, one cannot choose the universal directly, one always determines it in a particular way. Hegel often remarked that even if one chooses the universal in its abstract indeterminacy, this still represents one of the many equally possible and therefore particular determinations of the universal. A determination is always particular; as such, it is set both against other possible particulars and against the universal. We have already seen that evil originates in the divergence between the particular and the universal. It is thus, Hegel argues, "this *particularity* of the will itself which further determines itself as evil. For particularity exist only as a *duality*" (GW 14, § 139R, 121). The argument was articulated with additional clarity in Hegel's Heidelberg lectures on logic:

> To decide means to set a determinate moment, which, as a determinate, has an opposite. This determinate is a finite as such, and posited against the universal. To decide, therefore, is to make oneself a singular determinate. Hence its law is to make oneself valid as a singularity, and this making itself valid as a singular is then the evil. (GW 29, 42)[26]

The mystery of evil is thus, it seems, dispelled. But it also seems to turn it into a banality, because as we have seen, in acting and thinking the subject is bound to engage its subjectivity. To think and act is to think and act *seriously*. Indeed, if this is the source of the evil, the latter becomes consubstantial with the fact of consciousness in which the self-conscious I always brings about an opposition between subject and object and an affirmation of its independence. On numerous occasions Hegel clearly argues in this sense. "The doing is itself this

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26   See also GW 26,2, 901–902: "To evil belongs the abstraction of self-certainty. Only a man, in so far as he can also be evil, is good. […] The two are inseparable, and their inseparability lies in the fact that the concept becomes objective to itself, and as an object immediately has the determination of something differentiated."

estrangement", he asserts in the *Phenomenology*, only a stone, not even a child can be innocent (GW 9, 254). In the lecture on logic, he claims that "the evil is subjectivity insofar as it is for itself" (GW 26,3, 1239). And in the lectures on religion, he argues that the evil originates in the cognition, or in the very separation that gives rise to being for itself. "To be evil means abstractly to singularize oneself, the singularization that separates oneself from the universal" (GW 29, 418).[27] According to Hegel, there is a certain *general evil* that stems from the fact that a subject acts and thinks for itself and in a particular way. This is the evil stain that is "in the nature of the spirit" (GW 26,1, 411). And accordingly, Hegel does not lament this, far from it. For him, this general evil is rather the mark of human freedom and rationality, whereas "paradise means a zoo" (GW 23, 43).

But if evil is to this extent *necessary*, inscribed in the very concept of a finite rational being, Hegel insists that it is also something that should *not* be, that should be *overcome*. We have seen that a rational subject is bound to act or think in a determinate and therefore particular way, and this is an inevitable consequence of the logical structure of the concept. It is, however, of decisive importance whether an individual satisfies herself by remaining within this realm of particularity or whether she considers her particularity as a determination of the universal. If, in thinking and doing, she succeeds in universalizing her particularity, she is good. If she does not, if she remains in the realm of the particular, she is evil – and this time the evil is her *individual evil*, for which she is fully responsible.

> So, the standpoint of the separation of the spirit is a necessary standpoint. Equally necessary is also the standpoint that the spirit wills the good. But that it wills the particular or remains in that standpoint, that it wills only the abstract and puts only the individual in it, this is its business and its guilt. – Man must will the universal good, but that he should remain there, that he should put an arbitrary content into this good, or that he should obey his will [in] its [naturality] – to remain there is his guilt. To remain in the particularity is the *guilt* of the particular. Evil, then, features in the spirit only as a moment: but as a moment that is to be overcome, but as a moment it features also in the good. (GW 26, 1, 411–412)

In the end, we can imagine a classic situation in which a subject chooses between the good and the evil. "Because I am absolutely for myself, the differences that we call good and evil are then, in relation to the will, the one the universal, the other the particular" (GW 26, 3, 1237). The logical problem is,

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27   See also GW 29, 418.

however, that according to Hegel's conception of reason there is no universal as such, so the choice is always between particulars. Or, as he puts it in the *Science of Logic*, "there is no other true logical division" than that the universal divides *itself* into *coordinated* sides of the universal and the particular, leaving empty the place of the universal that they are both subordinated to (see GW 12, 38). In reaching for the good the subject inevitably grasps the evil. If we remain at this immediate level, we should therefore conclude that man is inherently evil. And in Hegel's view, this is true. But the whole point, both logically and ethically, is that we should not remain at this level, that we should think and actualize this particular as a concrete determination of the universal, and in this way try to overcome the evil we have brought about by our intervention in the world. We may, of course, fail in achieving this, fail in so many ways and to such varying degrees. This is then our individual evil for which we are responsible in person. Yet provided we indeed try to overcome this general evil, that is, provided we *seriously* intend to universalize the particular we have proposed, we might prove to be good. And in the process, we will have realized our individual selves.

<div style="text-align:center">⚓</div>

One final remark. After introducing the concept of the evil, Hegel devotes the next paragraph of the *Philosophy of Right* to an extensive exposition of its various degrees. In this progression, he begins with simple bad conscience and ends, quite surprisingly, with *irony* as the supreme form of evil. How so, one might ask?

In order to answer this question, I propose to compare Hegel's sequence with a parallel progression of three forms of the wrong, *das Unrecht*, in the chapter on the abstract right (see GW 14, 85ff.). There, the progression begins with unintentional wrongdoing, passes through deception, and ends with crime. The principle of division is the mode in which the sphere of right is undermined. In the unintentional wrong, two particular wills claim the exclusive ownership of the same property. In such a collision, at least one of them must be wrong. However, here, right or wrong is merely a matter of fact, and can be easily resolved, at least in principle, since both parties fully recognize the general framework of right. In fact, they both affirm the realm of right as they both pretend that something is rightfully theirs. At the next stage, that of deception, a person pretends that something is her property despite knowing perfectly well that this is not the case. Here the situation already takes on a

more threatening allure, for in deception the very form of right is abused in an instrumental way. But even here the situation is not yet extreme, because, as in the case of vice masquerading as virtue, the framework of right continues to be acknowledged, at least in principle. In contrast, in the case of crime the entire sphere of right is undone, because what is known to be wrong is affirmed to be right. Crime is an infinite judgement, Hegel claims (GW 14, § 95, 89), which negates not only this particular right but the universal as such, the very capacity to have rights.

Something similar applies to irony, I think, at least as Hegel understood it.[28] Irony is certainly not the most cruel or diabolical form of evil, far from it. But what makes it extreme is the fact that by playing with the distinction between true and false, right and wrong, good and evil, it dissolves the very place of the universal. If the good is made actual by attempting to universalize the particular, once the place of the universal is lost, the very possibility of the good vanishes. This is what makes irony so dangerous, in Hegel's view, the utmost form of the evil.[29]

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28   Hegel's portrayal of Romantic irony in the *Philosophy of Right* differs substantially from the irony – this time conceived in an entirely positive sense – that he attributes to Socrates. Whereas the latter practised it with the intention of confusing opinion and attaining rational knowledge, the Romantics intended to use it with the intention of destroying any certainty, even if rational and true, just to demonstrate the sovereign power of their selves. It is, of course, another question as to what extent such a characterization of irony applies to Schlegel against whom it is presumably directed.

29   Hegel's criticism of Romantic irony (and of Romanticism in general) may be so severe because, paradoxically, he recognizes its proximity to the true speculation. Both, that is, insist on the importance of the subjective moment in reason. "This *subjectivity*, *selflyness* (not selfishness) [*Selbstischkeit* (*nicht Selbstsucht*)] is indeed the principle of cognition itself" (GW 17, 27). But how to distinguish the two? Or, how to distinguish the *Eigensinn* that, according to Hegel, is the honour of the mankind from the *Eigensinn* that has to be broken if one wants to enter the field of reason? For Hegel, argues convincingly Mascat, "the fundamental dividing line between irony and philosophy is therefore clearly to be found in the *seriousness* (*Ernst*) that belongs only to the latter" (Mascat 2017, 364). In this sense, seriousness is the opposite of irony. However, the problem is further complicated by the fact that a subject may merely pretend to be serious… On that, see Böhm (2023). On the delicate characteristics of the *Eigensinn*, see also Hergouth in the present volume: "*Eigensinn* implies the existence of some *Sinn* that is not *eigen*, as a rebellious independence within subordination, the impulse to save as much as possible" (2024, 178).

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CHAPTER SIX

Hegel and the Right of Evil

Giulia La Rocca

The aim of this chapter is to propose a reading of the dynamic of inclusion and exclusion through an interpretation of Hegel's figure of the evil conscience. The main point of the chapter is to reveal the dialectic underlying the opposition of the good and the evil, according to which the so-called universal good itself turns out to be evil, and therefore needs to be redetermined.

Although the contribution will focus on the dialectical movement between the good in itself and the evil conscience in the philosophy of spirit, it is worth starting with a reconstruction of its logical form in order to understand Hegel's account of evil as thought-determination. Accordingly, the chapter firstly proposes an excursus through some occurrences of the term "evil" in Hegel's *Science of Logic*, in order to make explicit which logical structure underlies the figure of the evil conscience. Secondly, it deals with this figure in the realm of the spirit. By pushing Hegel's argument further, it tries to draw some consequences concerning the dialectic of good and evil as a dialectic of exclusion and inclusion.

The Logical Form of Evil

In Hegel's philosophy, the category of "evil" not only has a practical, moral connotation, but it is characterized by a logical form. It is precisely by

comprehending some of the analogies that Hegel suggests between the determination of evil and particular logical structures, which can be read as defining the pure conceptual form of evil, that we can come to a reinterpretation of the role of the evil conscience (*das böse Gewissen*) in Hegel's *Element of the Philosophy of Rights*.

References to the category of evil occur in the *Science of Logic* where the thinking activity is objectified in a thought-determination, which is characterized by the two following features. Firstly, its self-identity is not an immediate identity, but it results from a reference to itself mediated through the negation of its otherness (it is the negation of its own negative). Secondly, the self-identity and self-subsistence is affirmed abstractly, i.e. insofar as it posits its otherness as something in itself null and lacking self-subsistence, and abstracts from it. This is despite the fact that its self-reference is only possible through the mediation of this otherness.

Firstly, in the Doctrine of Being – the sphere of being as determinate being – the thought determination which is associated with evil is the being-for-itself that affirm its unity by means of exclusion of the other being-for itself. The being-for-itself is "absolutely *determinate being*", i.e. not the finite being as simple negation – the determinate being that defines its own determinacy only at the limit with its opposite, thus at the limit with its negation.[1] Rather it is the unity that results from the negation of its own being-other, that is, of its own finitude. The being-for-itself would therefore be absolute insofar as it is detached from any reference to something external, because its identity with itself is already constituted by mediation (the negation of its own negative). The being-for-itself is therefore infinity, as resulting from the self-negation of the finitude.[2] And yet, since it is posited as one and absolute precisely by virtue of the exclusion of the other being-for-itself, its independence is an abstract one, because it actually relies on a relationship, namely that of exclusion.

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1   GW 21, 144/Hegel 2010, 126. Cf.: "We say that something is for itself inasmuch as it sublates otherness, sublates its connection and community with other, has rejected them by abstracting from them. The other is in it only *as* something sublated, as its *moment*" (GW 21,145/Hegel 2010, 126-127).

2   In this regard, Cf. Becker, 2021. Becker argues that the logical form corresponding to the category of evil in the *Elements of Philosophy of Right* can be found in the Doctrine of Being, because this is the sphere of finite thought as well as the objective spirit in the philosophy of right, in which evil appears. However, in the thought determination of the being-for-itself, thinking activity already sublates its finitude; indeed, the being-for-itself is the first infinite determinate being. Moreover, Becker does not take into account the analogy established by Hegel between evil and the contradiction of positive and negative in the Doctrine of Essence.

> Driven to the extreme of the one as being-for-itself, self-subsistence is an abstract, formal self-subsistence that destroys itself. It is the ultimate, most stubborn error, one which takes itself as the ultimate truth, whether it assumes the more concrete form of abstract freedom, of pure "I", and further still of evil. (GW 21, 160/Hegel 2010, 140)

Evil in the sphere of being is therefore the thought determination that is not the immediate determinate and finite being (simple negation), but rather the affirmation of infinity as self-reference resulting from the self-negation of the finitude (negation of negation). Because of this, it claims to be self-subsistent and absolute unity. In fact, however, it abstracts from the fact that this unity is possible only by means of exclusion of other unities, thus by means of reference to otherness.

Secondly, in the Doctrine of Essence the thinking activity already has a self-referential form. Indeed, essence is reflection. It posits itself insofar as it posits its immediacy as semblance (*Schein*), i.e. it negates the self-subsistence of its immediate being, which is itself posited as simple negation, and returns to identity with itself. The essence, therefore, affirms itself only by positing itself as immediate being and then negating that this immediate being – which, as immediate, does not show the mediation out of which it comes from and seems to be self-sufficient – is an independent determinate being. By doing so, however, the essence negates that its reference to its (self as) otherness is constitutive for its identity with itself. This dynamic manifests itself as an explicit contradiction in the thought-determinations of the positive and the negative. These are not only opposed to each other and so exclude one another, but at the same time each one is in itself opposite to itself and so identical with the other one. The positive is positive because it posits its self-identity by negating the negative, the otherness. Therefore, however, it is in itself the negative, i.e. that which is what it is only by negation. The negative, in its turn, posits itself through the negation of the positive, that is of the opposite, but by doing so it is identical with itself, thus a positive. Both are the contradiction: each of them is opposed to and identical with its own negative, which is thus constitutive to it and which however is excluded. As an example of this logical structure, Hegel writes in a note that, by analogy: "[e]vil consists in maintaining one's own ground as against the good; it is positive negativity" (GW 11, 284/Hegel 2010, 379).

Finally, in the Doctrine of the Concept, evil is the particular moment that opposes the actualization of the objective, universal good by the subjective will. It is the actuality insofar as "it still has the determination of *immediate existence*",

and thus appears as "an insuperable restriction" (GW 12, 234/Hegel 2010, 732). However, here in the sphere of the concept this restriction has already been sublated and posited as the mediation of the thinking activity with itself (as its own objectivity). It confronts the realization of the good only as long as it appears as immediate being, but it is no longer a being in and for itself. Therefore, it is more properly defined as "evil or indifferent" (GW 12, 234/Hegel 2010, 732).

From this brief *excursus* on the occurrences of evil in the *Science of Logic,* it follows that the logical form of evil is the one of a thought-determination which, being the self-reference that has negated the independence of the otherness, posits itself as self-subsistent and claims to be absolute. But in doing so excludes the very otherness which is the condition of its own self-subsistence. This form of thought articulates a quality that made itself independent but abstract (in the logic of being) as the contradictory opposite of the good (in the logic of essence), and as the immediate, particular being of actuality which, in its immediacy, appears as a restriction to the actualization of the good (in the logic of the concept).

Evil as the Reversal of Morality

Having analysed the logical structure of evil, I now turn to dialectics it undergoes as a concrete determination of the spirit, that is, as an evil conscience.

In the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, the evil conscience appears in the section "The Good and the Conscience", where Hegel deals with the determination of the good itself, insofar as this latter is "actualized by the particular will" (TWA 7, § 130, 244/Hegel 1991, 157). It is therefore the matter of determining what, on the one hand counts "as universal welfare and essentially as *universal in itself*", i.e. acknowledged and shared ethic values within a society, while on the other hand it has to express the freedom of the consciousness, its right of self-realization through its own subjective will, and must therefore be posited by the conscience (the moral consciousness) itself (TWA 7, § 130, 243/Hegel 1991, 157). The good ought to be the substantial character of the conscience – it expresses what counts as true value, so that the conscience ought "to make the good its end and fulfil it" – and this action of the conscience is the only means by which the good is actualized (TWA 7, § 131, 244/Hegel 1991, 158). Consequently, the subjective will has its obligation towards this determination of the universal good, which provides the criterion

for the evaluation of an action "as right or wrong, good or evil" (TWA 7, § 132, 245/Hegel 1991, 158).

This means that, on the one hand, the conscience must determine this universal and posit *what* is duty, expressing in this determination its inner certainty, that is, what it knows as its own essence. On the other hand, this subjective essence must at the same time be the universal essence – the substance as such, the shared value within the society.

> *Conscience* expresses the absolute entitlement of the subjective self-consciousness to know *in itself* and *from itself* what right and duty are, and to recognize only what thus knows as the good; it also consists in the assertion that what it thus knows and wills is *truly* right and duty. As this unity of subjective knowledge and that which has being in and for itself, conscience is a sanctuary which it would be *sacrilege* to violate. (TWA 7, § 137, 255/Hegel 1991, 164)

The determination of the good rests therefore on an ambiguity: "the identity of the subjective knowledge and volition", i.e. what defines the inner individuality of the conscience has to count at the same time as a universally valid principle (TWA 7, § 137, 255/Hegel 1991, 165). Precisely in this ambiguity lies the possibility for the conscience to be evil. This occurs when it elevates to a universal principle a determination of its subjective will that is only its own *arbitrium*. As Hegel states, the self-consciousness "is capable of being evil", that is "of making into its principle […] the *arbitrariness* of its *own particularity*, giving the latter precedence over the universal and realizing it through its action" (TWA 7, § 139, 260-261/Hegel 1991, 167).

However, conscience is *always* at the point of turning into evil (Cf. Menegoni 2004, 307): whatever the determination the conscience may posit as the good, its action is unavoidably valued as evil. Indeed, since the good, in order to be concrete and actual, cannot remain the inner certainty of the conscience but has to become objective, posited as existing by means of an action, it is the particular determining ground of a particular will, which thus excludes some other determination of it. Consequently, the actualization of the universal good, concretized as the action of a singular conscience, appears to the other self-consciousness as one-sided, partial and arbitrary, and as excluding them from the participation in the determination.

This dynamic is articulated in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, namely in the section "c. Conscience, The "beautiful soul", evil and its forgiveness" – the last subsection of "Morality". Here the conscience considers itself as "the pure,

immediate truth" in its inner certainty, and "as a moral *essentiality* or as *duty*", loosened from any external universality imposed on it:

> [C]onscience is free from any content whatever; it absolves itself from any specific duty which is supposed to have the validity of the law. In the strength of its own self-assurance it possesses the majesty of absolute autarky, to bind and to loose. (GW 9, 347, 349/Hegel 1977a, 391, 393)

Such a self-consciousness is caught within the contradiction that, for it, the determination of its self-certainty – the identity with itself – is at the same time the truth, objective and universal. And yet, being posited as objective by means of an action, the determination of the universal good unavoidably turns evil. Indeed, in order for it to be acknowledged by other consciences as the objective, universal good has to be exteriorized. However, since truth is given only as the adequacy to the inner self-certainty of the conscience – independently of what is the content of this self-certainty– the other consciences cannot judge on the basis of the external determination that they see realized in the action. They cannot know whether the acting self-consciousness is good or evil, and they have rather to regard it as evil, because, being themselves consciences, each of them cannot accept as good something that has not been determined by its own inwardness and that is instead externally given. That determination

> is something expressing only the self of another, not their own self: not only do they know themselves to be free from it, but they must dispose of it in their own consciousness, nullify it by judging and explaining it in order to preserve their own self. (GW 9, 350/Hegel 1977a 395)

In its exteriorization the good becomes particular, and this particular can no longer be justified on the basis of self-certainty of the self-consciousness, which is something inner. Therefore, the authenticity of the determination of the good cannot be valued from outside, that is from the other self-consciousness. On the basis of this gap between the truth of the inner self-certainty and the lack of external recognition, evil conscience can develop hypocrisy and irony, thus showing the absoluteness of its arbitrium against any given value.

The hypocritical character consists in the fact that the conscience, though knowing the good in itself, consciously determines its own particular will against the good, so that for the conscience itself it is true that its own will is determined as evil, and still it states that its determination is good (Cf. TWA 7, § 140, 266-267/Hegel 1991, 170-172).

At the first level, hypocrisy is "the formal determination of untruthfulness, whereby *evil* is in the first place represented *for others* as *good*", but it reaches its peak when the conscience deceits itself by means of this untruthfulness (TWA 7, § 140, 268/Hegel 1991, 172). Indeed, in this case the hypocritical conscience undergoes a process of perversion in which it is for itself (and not for others) that the subject provides a justification of the evil, as it could be turned into good by means of a good pretence (Cf. Chiereghin 1980, 365). By lying to itself, the self-consciousness undermines its being for itself (and not for the others), the determining ground of its will according to its self-certainty.

The absoluteness of the subjectivity against the universal is accomplished as irony. This is the possibility to subvert any determination of the good. The conscience is aware that it can vanish any pre-existing established value that it is in its power to dissolute any binding to a given content (Cf. Morani 2019; Rebentisch 2013).

> The only possible culmination [...] of that subjectivity which regards itself as the ultimate instance is reached when it *knows* itself as that power of resolution and decision on [matters of] truth, right, and duty which is already in itself (*an sich*) present within the preceding forms. Thus, it does indeed consist in knowledge of the objective side of ethics, but without that self-forgetfulness and self-renunciation which seriously immerses itself in this objectivity and makes it the basis of its action. Although it has a relation (*Beziehung*) to this objectivity, it is at the same time distances from it and knows *itself* as that which *wills* and resolves in a particular way but may *equally well* will and resolve otherwise. – "You in fact honestly accept a law as existing in and for itself" [it says to others]; "I do so, too, but I go further than you, for I am also beyond this law and can do *this or that* as I please. It is not the thing (*Sache*) which is excellent, it is I who am excellent and master of both law and thing; I *merely play* with them as with my own caprice, and in this ironic consciousness in which I let the highest of things perish, I *merely enjoy myself*". (TWA 7, § 140, 278-279/Hegel 1991, 180-182; translation revised by author)[3]

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3   Hegel's conception of irony keeps together the pre-Socratic and the rhetorical meaning of the word "irony". As Christoph Menke (1996, 144-146) notices, according to the first one, the ironic consciousnesses are either deceivers, who for the sake of their own interests give themselves for the ones who have a knowledge, thereby expressing their contempt towards established values and misrecognizing what counts as knowledge. In this sense, irony is the destruction of ethics and virtue. According to its second meaning, moreover, irony is subversion (*Verkehrung*) and dissimulation (*Verstellung*): the ironic consciousness says the opposite of what it really means. Thereby, the subject shows its freedom from the content of its consciousness.

If we take these arguments to their logical conclusion, then the definition of the good as the self-certainty of conscience results in evil, both in terms of content and form. On the one hand, the conscience that affirms its own determination of the good, that its own *arbitrium* against what is acknowledged as the shared, universal good, is evil.[4] On the other hand, the good as self-certainty claiming for universality (whatever its determination may be) is itself *structurally* the evil, because it turns out to be only allegedly the universal, insofar as it excludes the other self-consciousnesses from its determination, and therefore cannot be acknowledged by them. The first aspect of evil actually implies the background of an ethical order of society as already given – the context of a *Sittlichkeit* – as a criterion for deciding on the moral determination of the conscience as good or evil. Conversely, this same order is a determination of the good that at a certain moment of the history of the spirit has been posited as universal, as the substance of the ethical life. As such, however, it is limited and one-sided.

Evil as the Dissolution of the Ethical Form of Life

The relationship between the evil conscience and the given context of the *Sittlichkeit* must therefore be further developed. What is at stake is the role of what appears as evil conscience in determining the acknowledged universal good within an ethical form of life. Since the conscience is evil because it opposes its own determination of the good, on the basis of its identity with itself, to the shared values of a society, it opens up a split (*Entzweiung*) within that same society. It makes the split emerge that lies in that determinate form of life.

The universal good is the substance of an ethical form of life insofar as, at a given moment in the history of the spirit, it is the truth for the spirit, i.e. it is the way in which the spirit knows itself and makes itself objective, in "laws and institutions" that are therefore fixed as the necessary and universal ethical content valid in and for itself (TWA 7, § 144, 293-294/Hegel 1991, 189). As a consequence, the action of the evil conscience – opposing its own determination of the good to the shared one – is the negation, the misrecognition, and contestation of the universality of the good. As such, the evil consists of the emergence of a dichotomy within the life of the spirit, that is of a crisis.

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4   Bojana Jovićević draws exactly the opposite conclusion in this volume when she claims that: "evil is explained by the same principle that explains good, it cannot be nothing else than a mere form of its logical privation, its 'badness', i.e., nothing but the principle of good itself" (2024, 146).

The evil conscience is the manifestation, *in individuo*, of the fact that a given shape of the spirit has turned into a dead form, i.e. the fact that there is a dichotomy between the laws and institutions in which the spirit has objectified its knowledge of itself, and the way the spirit now experiences itself, so that that objectified knowledge is no more real (*wirklich*), it no longer responds to the need of the spirit. Evil is in this sense the expression of the dissatisfaction of the spirit with regard to the established form of life. It demonstrates that the given determination of good is no longer capable of accounting for the way the spirit knows itself, and thus for the identity of the spirit with itself. The identification between what is considered to be good in itself and the inner self-certainty of the conscience fails. Therefore, the conscience reflects on that determination of the universal good, which now, taken as the object of the consciousness, reveals its limitedness. It comes to reveal that its claimed universality is only an alleged one. As such, the so-called universal good is shown to be arbitrary, without justification, and is called into question. Being excluded from the otherwise shared horizon of values, the subjective will thus discovers itself as determining ground of what counts as good and makes itself into absolute criterium of good and evil. This vindication of the subjective will in its right to decide on good and evil brings to light that the ethical unity is torn apart, which leads to the dissolution of this form of life.

Indeed, when the limitedness of this determination of the good becomes an obstacle for the self-recognition of the spirit in its objectivity, consciences feel the need to oppose it, that is to act evilly. Self-consciousness therefore has a reason,

> To renounce duties and laws that otherwise it would immediately fulfil. Now it is the general tendency to require grounding, to require that an acknowledged [practice] be connected firmly to some wholly universal principle. If such grounds, i.e. something wholly universal, are not discovered as the basis, the representation of virtue becomes precarious. Then duty as such becomes something that is not valid absolutely, but only insofar as the ground of its validity are known. Connected with this is the separation of individuals from each other and from the whole; for consciousness is subjectivity, and it has the need to isolate itself, to grasp itself as a particular subjectivity in the form of a *this*. This subjective inwardness, grasping itself in the form of singularity, is what produces vanity, self-seeking, etc. – qualities that are contrary to faith. Thus self-interests and passions are unleashed as destructive qualities, and the destruction of a people runs rampant. (Hegel 2012, 162-163)[5]

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5   "Dem Selbstbewußtsein warden so gründe eingegeben, sich von dem Pflichten, den Gesetzen loszusagen, die es sonst unmittelbar erfüllte. Jetzt ist überhaupt die Tendenz, die Begründung

Hegel makes reference to the figure of Socrates as the beginning of the determination of the good according to the subjective self-certainty (TWA 7, § 140, 277/Hegel 1991, 180).

> In the shapes which it more commonly assumes in history (as in the case of Socrates, the Stoics, etc), the tendency to look inwards into the self and to know and determine from within the self what is right and good appears in epochs when what is recognized as right and good in actually custom is unable to satisfy the better will. When the existing world of freedom has become unfaithful to the better will, this will no longer finds itself in the duties recognized in this world and must seek to recover in ideal inwardness alone that harmony which it has lost in actuality.[6]

Hegel's reference to Socrates is telling, because it is this figure who brings together both the practice of philosophy and the practice of irony. On the one hand, Socrates is the philosopher who, challenging the presuppositions underlying the Greek ethical form of life and its shared common sense, was considered as an opponent of the good and the gods of Ancient Greece, and therefore dangerous to the established order, i.e. evil.

In this sense, philosophy itself – as the practice of free thinking that undermines presuppositions – plays the role of evil, as long as it blows out the ethical order and causes the crisis to explode. It is no coincidence that the example of Socrates is also used in the "Introduction" to the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where Hegels states that philosophy rises in the moment of unsatisfaction with the shared values, in the times of decadence and corruption of a form of ethical life.

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zu fordern, daß ein Anerkanntes im Zusammenhang mit einem ganz Allgemeinen gefaßt wurde. Indem solche Gründe, d.h. etwas ganz Allgemeines, als Basis nicht gefunden wird, so wird die Vorstellung von der Tugend schwankend. So wird die Pflicht als solche nicht als absolute geltend, sondern nur insofern die Gründe, weshalb sie gelten soll, gewußt werden. Damit hängt zusammen, daß die Individuen sich voneinander und vom Ganzen absondern; denn das Bewußtsein ist Subjektivität, und diese hat das Bedürfnis, sich zu vereinzeln, sich als besondere Subjektivität in der Form eines *Diesen* zu fassen. Dieses subjektive Innere, in der Form der Einzelheit sich fassend, ist das, woraus Eitelkeit, Selbstsucht, etc. hervorbricht, Bestimmungen, die dem Glauben, dem Unmittelbare zuwider sind. So treten die eigenen Interessen, Leidenschaften losgebunden als Verderbens hervor. So bricht das Verderben eines Volkes aus" (V 12, 50-51).

6   TWA 7, § 138, 259/Hegel 1991, 166. Cf. TW 18, 458; cf. Rebentisch (2013), who argues against Hegel that while he recognized the beginning of modern morality in Socrates, he then considered the Socratic practice of irony to be merely subjective and not directed against the thing itself.

> When the inner inadequacy occurs between that which the spirit wants and that in which it can find its satisfaction, so philosophy emerges. Thus, the flourishing of philosophy shows every time the fall of a previously satisfactory situation.[7]

Against this loss of values, the consciousness retires, flees into its interiority and determines its truth only on the basis of the identity with itself and in the inner dimension of thought.[8]

On the other hand, Socrates practises philosophy precisely by using irony. Along with philosophy, indeed, irony itself plays a role in the erosion of the assumptions underlying a given determination of the universal good. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Right* held in 1822/23, Hegel establishes an explicit parallelism between the corruption of democracy in ancient Athens and the figure of Socrates on the one side, and the loss of faith in objective shared values and the ironic consciousness at Hegel's own time on the other.[9]

The ironic consciousness is the consciousness of its own subjective freedom as the power to be for itself the determining ground of good and evil, and brings to light the dissolution of the ethical form of life.

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7   The translation of he author; cf: »Wenn die innere Unangemessenheit zwischen dem, was der Geist will, und dem, worin er sich befriedigen kann, stattfindet, dann tritt die Philosophie hervor. So beweist jedesmal das Aufblühen der Philosophie den Untergang eines Zustands, der früher befriedigte« (V 6, 296). This passage clearly recalls what Hegel has been affirming since his first published philosophical essay "*The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*": "Dichotomy is the source of *the need of philosophy*" (GW 4, 12/Hegel 1977b, 89).

8   Cf. »Es sind die Zeiten des beginnen des Untergangs, des Verderbens der Völker; da hat sich der Geist in die Räume des Gedankens geflüchtet, die Philosophie sich ausgebildet« (V 6, 296).

9   The 1822/23 lectures on the philosophy of right are transmitted to us as the *Nachschrift* by Heinrich Gustav Hotho, who writes: "Dieß ist auf einer Seite auch eine Krankheit unserer Zeit, daß die Ehrfurcht vor den Gesetzen nicht mehr da ist, sondern daß der Mensch in seiner Reflexion sich zurückhält [...] Insofern das Objective nicht in der Einheit mehr [ist] des inneren Freiheitsbegriffs ist, belibt dem Menschen nur diese abstracte sich sich beziehende Subjectivität. Deser Standpunkt ist also überhaput der, daß das Subjecr in sich sich zurückzieht, und sich weiß als Begriff der Freiheit. Der Mangel ist die Abstraction dieses Standpunkts. Es ist die Spitze wo das Böse möglich ist, und aufgeht" (VRPh, 436).
Similarly, in Eduard Gans' addictions to the *Elements of the Philosophy of Rights*, we can read: "Only in ages when the actual world is a hollow, spiritless, and unsettled existence (*Existence*) may the individual be permitted to flee from actuality and retreat into his inner life. Socrates made his appearance at the time when Athenian democracy had fallen into ruin. He evaporated the existing world and retreated into himself in search of the right and the good. Even in our times it happens that reverence for the existing order is in varying degrees absent, and people seek to equate accepted values with their own will, with what they have recognized" (TWA 7, §138, Zu., 260/Hegel 1991, 166-167). Cf. also Siep, 1982.

Evil as the Dialectical Element in the Redetermination of the Universal

Therefore, despite their apparently only negative connotation, the evil conscience – and the ironic conscience as its highest form – being indivisibly entangled with subjective freedom and the dissolution of *Sittlichkeit*, do play a dialectical role in the actualization of the good and of freedom, since the actualization of good requires subjective freedom as its condition, as seen above.[10] In this regard it is worth examining the way in which the one-sidedness and limitedness of a given determination of the good is revealed precisely in the radical affirmation of subjectivity of the ironic conscience.

Irony is not simply an exercise in subjective arbitrariness. Instead, it requires that a conscience refer to what is recognized as determining the universal good in the contemporary given historical form of the spirit, and then dissociate itself from this determination and subverts it.[11]

Thus the logical form of evil becomes evident not only in the realm of being – a quality that has become for itself autonomous self-determination – but also in the realm of essence: evil is defined as the negation of the good, which it opposes and then excludes, claiming its absoluteness precisely insofar as it can abstract from the good. Still, in this movement the evil posits the good itself as something abstract and self-contradictory, since the good excludes evil and thus is no more universal as it claims to be. It is precisely by positing itself as evil – that is, as the contradiction that abstracts from the universal good and yet claims to be absolute – that conscience reveals the universal good itself to be the same contradiction that evil is. Good and evil are both evil, and it is only because the former is assumed as a normative value within a community that the conscience opposing it is defined as evil. Since this conscience questions the good and reveals it to be non-absolute,

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10   Cf. Menke 1996, 143. Cf. also Rebentisch (2013), who argues that irony plays a constitutive role in the ethical form of life, and affirms, against Hegel, that it is necessary to the safeguard of the freedom that Hegel himself recognizes as indispensable in modern age. Cf. Wahsner (1999), who suggests that irony has a role as resistance against the becoming positive of the shapes of spirit, that is their becoming fixed, and thus turning into a presupposition in which the spirit does no longer recognize itself.

11   As Christoph Menke points out, However, the ironic conscience implies not only the detachment of the individual from the common good, but also their constitutive relation to it; what irony actually means, it can only say through the opposite (Menke 1996, 199).

its action cannot be accepted within a community that still finds its truth in the established system.[12]

Good and evil, the objective universal and the subjective will of the conscience, are therefore contradictorily correlated: the good as the positive, the evil as the negative. Both are in themselves a contradiction, but the former only in itself, the latter as a posited contradiction. The evil conscience, the negative, is "to be *identical with itself over against identity*, and consequently, because of this excluding reflection, to exclude itself from itself" (GW 11, 280/Hegel 2010, 375-376). The good, the positive, is contradiction "in that, as the positing of self-identity by the *excluding* of the negative, it makes itself into a *negative*, hence into the other which it excludes from itself" (GW 11, 280/Hegel 2010, 375). Both are self-subsistent totalities which exclude one another and still are necessarily implying one another.

Consequently, when the subjective will claims its absoluteness, it posits not only itself as abstract and one-sided, but indivisibly the universal as well. The evil conscience brings to light the only alleged universality of the determination the good within a given shape of the spirit, its limitedness.

Particularly as ironic consciousness, by subverting any value – and thus detaching itself from the good and putting the absoluteness of this good into question – it shows the good as a fixed presupposition. In this sense, the ironic consciousness also plays a role in the becoming conscious of the historical and changeable dimension of the determination of the good.[13]

Therefore, the re-determination of the universal good by means of its conflict with the evil conscience shows the emancipatory potential of the evil, insofar as it unleashes a dialectical movement by means of which the good frees itself from the one-sidedness and limitedness unavoidably implied in its particularizing for a determinate form of life of the spirit. The evil – conceived of as the

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12   Cf. Geiger, 2027. Cf. also Yonover 2021 on the right of revolutionary action despite the impossibility of accounting for it *within* the given ethical form of life the revolution would subvert.

13   "This supremely subjective point of view can arise only in a highly cultivated age in which faith has lost its seriousness, which now exists essentially only in the vanity of all things" (TWA 7, § 140 Zu., 286/Hegel 1991, 184). Cf. "die Haltung der Ironie [ist] die Zerstörung der Sittlichkeit"; "die „Vernichtungskunst" der Ironie besteht in einer radikalen Umkehrung des transparenten Ausdrucksverhältnisses zwischen Substanz und Handeln, Sittlichkeit und Subjekt, Gehalt und Gestalt"; "Die Ironie des Individuums gegenüber dem Gemeinwesen [...] richtet sich nicht gegen den Anspruch auf (praktische) Geltung überhaupt, sondern gegen den Vorranganspruch des Gemeinwesens und seiner sittlich substantiellen Werte gegenüber den Individuen" (Menke, 1996, 146-147, 149). Cf. Rebentisch, 2013, 123.

thought determination characterized in the *Science of Logic* – would thus have its dialectical role acknowledged in the process of the realization of freedom. That is, evil would have its right.[14]

If then the evil conscience makes the one-sidedness of the good explicit, so it plays a constitutive role in the process of the realization of the good itself, because it is the drive to the redetermination, from time to time, of what is called universal, which must be rethought so that it can also take into account for the hitherto excluded subjectivity. However, it is not a question of quantitative inclusion, i.e. allowing the hitherto marginalized group to participate in the good and to have access to practices and institutions from which they have been excluded. Rather, what was considered to be good needs to be radically rethought, shared values and the practices and institutions that give them objectivity need to be reshaped. In other words, it is not that the established ethical system needs to be enlarged to welcome more subjects, but the determination on which the system rest has to change by confronting with the claims of these excluded subjects.

An Example: The Rabble

An example of the dynamic exposed above is the case of the rabble, notoriously treated at the §§ 241-245 of the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, which however remains unresolved within the Hegelian system.[15] The rabble is the social layer which does not find a place in the system of the States (*Stände*), that is the system that organizes the civil society. Consequently, it is not integrated in the latter, it is the element that remains excluded, outside.

> A human being with no estate is merely a private person and does not possess actual universality. (TWA 7, § 207, Zu., 360/Hegel 1991, 239, translation revised by author)

Therefore, the rabble tends to oppose resistance to the alleged universality (of the civil society and of the State above it) which does not include it.

> [R]abble is created only by the disposition associated with poverty, by inward indignation (*innere Empörung*) against the rich, against society, the government, etc. (TWA 7, § 244, Zu., 389/Hegel 1991, 266)

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14   It is right, "the *existence* of the *free will*", or the freedom as Idea, that is the concept of freedom as realized, made concrete in the world (TWA 7, § 29, 80/Hegel 1991, 58).

15   For this reading of the role of the rabble I take reference to Ruda, 2011. A similarly convincing argument was made by Zdravko Kobe: Hegel was perfectly aware of the mechanism of necessary impoverishment in (unrestricted) civil society, and that in his view the poor were actually justified in developing a rabble mentality (2019, 27).

It is not Hegel himself who directly suggests such an interpretation of the dynamic between the subjectivity of the rabble and the universality of the State. However, it is telling that he repeatedly associates the rabble with the semantic sphere of the evil. He says that poverty is not itself the constitutive character of the rabble, and yet it the condition for the rabble, because "the poor" have "the disposition of […] viciousness" (*Bösartigkeit*) (TWA 7, § 241, 388/Hegel 1991, 265). Indeed, this "gives rise to the evil", but the evil is "that the rabble do not have sufficient honour to gain their livelihood through their own work, yet claim that they have a right to receive their livelihood" (TWA 7, § 244, Zu., 389/ Hegel 1991, 266).

Conclusion

Drawing conclusions from the arguments presented here, what emerges is a conception of the evil as an element that, as a form of being-for-itself, i.e. the power to make itself an autonomous part in opposition to the good and to claim its own independence, brings to light the oppositional structure between the two, each of which posits itself only through the other, which is then excluded. But while the evil is the negative and immediately shows to have its self-identity only insofar as it opposes and negates the good – and precisely for that it is called "evil" – the good does not show its dependence on evil and only seems to exclude it. It is thus by means of the action of the evil conscience that the deficiency of the good is revealed.

The evil conscience, particularly in the form of irony, is the one that announces the crisis and dissolution of the ethical form, but it is also what allows that shape of spirit to redetermine itself and to overcome its limitations. Here I have tried to argue that the rabble can be an example of such a dynamic.

The resulting framework, in conclusion, is that evil is a factor that corroborates the process of the realization of the universal good and thus of freedom (being the good realized only through the action of subjective free will). The unity of the subjective will and the good in itself, therefore, is to be understood not as a state of affairs that is attained once for all, but rather as a constant redetermination of the universality of the good in its dialectical dynamic with the subjective will, which at each time pushes it to redetermine itself in order to sublate its one-sidedness.[16]

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16   "Thanks to the critical potential of morality, the concrete universal of the community can then also be seen as a normative principle and a task, which aims for its fulfilment even beyond Hegel's own elaborated solutions (as formulated for example in his theory of the state)" (Hofmann, 2014, 352). Cf. also Menke, 2018, 19-50.

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The Rationality of Evil

Bojana Jovićević

Introduction

The question we aim to clarify in this chapter is as follows: what are the sources of evil for rational, finite beings who are perfect in this respect: that they seek the true and the good. What are the reasons, if any, that cause our will to turn away from the good? Following Augustine's and Hegel's remarks on the subject, we will delineate two distinct conceptions of the good and the logical function ascribed to evil in relation to each of these positions. Specifically, we will examine the idea of evil as a form of privation, and thereof a lack of good (Augustine), and evil as a form of particularity, having a positive ontological existence in the individual (Hegel). In addition, we will elaborate on the idea of two evil individuals relating to each other in the act of forgiveness, as presented in the final subsection of the Morality chapter in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Evil as Privation

In *The Science of Logic*, in the section on the Idea of the good, Hegel equates evil with the form of "external contingency" (GW 11, 241/Hegel 2010a, 337)

in relation to the good. Thus, evil is that what is present in the form of external circumstances that lie outside the principle of the good and accidentally relate to it, preventing the good from its proper realization. For example, I wanted to help my brother, but I fell off the bike, so I did not manage to do it – if I did not fall, I would do it. My intention was all pure and good, it's just that in a milieu in which my act was carried out, an unpredictable circumstance came on my way and impeded my action. However, if evil is defined by way of negation and subtraction of the good,[1] then it makes no sense to speak of evil in terms of a separate logical principle on its own. In fact, if my action only imperfectly corresponds with the principle of the good – namely only in terms of what I (theoretically) ought to do, but have failed to do, then I cannot speak about evil at all – in the best case I can say is that my action was bad. So, badness is the imperfection of the good, good that did not turn out well on the way to its actualization (*Verwirklichung*). As Hegel puts it:

> The good is for the subjective concept the objective; actuality confronts it in existence as an insuperable restriction only in so far as it still has the determination of immediate existence, not of something objective in the sense that it is being in and for itself; it is rather either the evil or the indifferent, the merely determinable, whose worth does not lie within it. (2010a, 239)

As we can clearly infer from the previous paragraph, evil has no positive ontological existence on its own. Rather it is explained by the same principle that explains the good, and thus cannot be anything else but a mere form of its logical privation,[2] i.e. 'badness' - nothing but the principle of the good itself. And if this is so, if evil is, indeed, an inner logical division (*Entzweiung*) of the principle of the good itself, by committing an evil deed, we only conform to the universality of the principle of the good – by deviation from the good, we come to know good itself.

With this conception, the conception of the good as an all-encompassing universal principle (as a form of totality, to use Hegel's words) with nothing to oppose to it, there is no such thing as evil, there is no logical space for it. All

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1   Aristotle similarly defines evil action as the destruction of the good: "also in the case of evils the end or actuality must be worse than the potentiality; for that which is capable is capable alike of both contraries. Clearly, then, evil does not exist apart from things; for evil is by nature posterior to potentiality [20] Nor is there in things which are original and eternal any evil or error, or anything which has been destroyed—for destruction is an evil" (Met. 9, 27).

2   *Malum est privatio boni* reads the famous formula of Augustine; In his *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*, Augustine asks: "for what is all that we call evil if not the absence of good?" (NPNF, 13)

we can point our finger at is only a relative difference in relation to the good; each and every being is good according to its tautology – if it were not good, it would cease to be.[3] Evil is conceptually impossible, and yet, precisely as far as it is the privation of the good – all there is always already bears the mark of its lack and therefore testifies to its subsistence. Good is so total that it pervades everything and yet it cannot be actualized anywhere and evil is so null that it actualizes itself everywhere; good is all the time on the verge of becoming evil, as Hegel puts it, the principle, good itself, is completely corrupted; evil brings out the reasons that good does not want to know, to paraphrase Pascal, good's own wickedness, residing in its particularity.

Evil as Particularity

If evil is not to be explained simply in terms of privation of the good, since as we have already demonstrated, such a conception of the good itself is utterly perverted (not even in accordance with its own logical principle) – in its claim and pretension to universality and its actualization, it remains something particular – so, how are we to proceed, to step behind the back of this corrupted idea of the good and its relation to evil as being pure nothingness, in the form of an empty lack? Moreover, how are we to do this within the order of reasons, if all the reasons are the reasons of the good and for the good itself, and precisely in its particularity impose to ourselves as something universal?

In order to solve the problem, let us turn to Augustine and to his famous anecdote on stealing pears in the *Confessions* (2006, 31). As Augustine puts it:

> A group of young black-guards, and I among them, went out to knock down the pears and carry them off late one night, for it was our bad habit to carry on our games in the streets till very late. We carried off an immense load of pears, not to eat—for we barely tasted them before throwing them to the hogs. Our only pleasure in doing it was that it was forbidden. Such was my heart, O God, such was my heart: yet in the depth of the abyss. You had pity on it. Let that heart now tell You what it sought when I was thus evil for no object, having no cause for wrongdoing save my wrongness. The malice of the act was base and I loved it—that is to say I loved my own undoing, I loved the evil in me—not the thing for which I

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3   If principle and goodness are the same, if any lack at the level of the principle is explained outside the principle and therefore cannot be ascribed to the functioning of the principle itself, then there is no such thing as badness at the level of principle, and in this sense, we can speak about the good in terms of natural goodness. A being that has a malfunction or is in any way distorted, as long as it remains a natural thing, is perfectly fine, good.

did the evil, simply the evil: my soul was depraved, and hurled itself down
from security in You into utter destruction, seeking no profit from wicked-
ness but only to be wicked. (2006, 29)

Of course, stealing pears from neighbour can be dismissed as a relatively in-
nocent teenage prank, but what interests us are here are the reasons Augustine
gives why he did it. He says, in a subtle gradation of reasoning, that he did not
do it out of necessity or hunger, that neighbour's pears neither looked well nor
tasted good, and that he in fact had his own pears in the garden, but that he
did it nevertheless – purely out of enjoyment and pleasure of the theft and sin
itself.[4] So, what makes this anecdote so interesting, from the logical point of
view, is that Augustine does not evaluate (reflect) his own action in a manner
of badness, privation that belongs to the good itself.

He does not say, well, you know I did it because at first, I thought it was a good
thing to do, but then I did it and I found out retroactively that it was a bad
thing to do, so now I know what is a good thing to do, I should not steal, so
I am good, fully good. On the contrary, Augustine does not refer to any such
theory of the good in his explanation. He simply says, well, I did it for myself,
even more, out of the sheer enjoyment of the sin for the sake of the sin itself –
so I did not seek the true and the good and so this wickedness of mine cannot
be explained in terms of any kind of external obstacles that crossed my way,
but is to be verified solely and exclusively in terms of my own principle – that
I sought the sin, that I am evil.

What we are trying to point out is that the idea of sin cannot be explained in
terms of any external reference to the good, but only through the verification
of its own principle that transcends this very opposition in the first place. Sin,
in this context, logically speaking, functions as the opening up of the new
logical space of what good and evil are from the perspective of us as particular,
finite subjects. In other words, sin is not to be understood solely in terms of
some kind of negative ignorance that I should recognize in my condition hu-
maine, as that what defines me as rational, finite being (in relation to religious

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4   Others were with me and they saw it and approved it, it was like our small common good,
     there is an inherently intersubjective dimension of the sin, which we will leave aside at this
     point – the sin does not have any real causality within the world of natural objects, but gains
     one through intersubjectivity. As Augustine explicitly puts it: "if I had liked the pears that I
     stole and wanted to enjoy them, I might have committed the offence alone, if that had
     been sufficient, to get me the pleasure I wanted; I should not have needed to inflame the itch
     of my desires by rubbing against accomplices. But since the pleasure I got was not in the pears,
     it must have been in the crime itself, and put there by the companionship of others sinning
     with me" (2006, 33).

discourse on Adam's fall, original guilt etc.), but, on the contrary, as the positive affirmation of my own subjectivity. If I had external reasons for committing a sin that could be reduced to some higher principle of the good, then I would be a mere human creature, an empirical animal. However, precisely because these reasons are solely mine – the expression of my own *Eigensinn*[5] – we could say that we are subjects. Sin is merely a logical mean by which I express my own freedom to reject any principle of universality of the good that could be something other than myself, my own principle of the good. In other words, it is the subject's way of saying "no" to nature with her own reasoning, throughout the ideas she produces about it.

Basically, it is through the theory of the sin that 'human being' becomes the subject and not merely an anthropological, psychic or confessional individual. This is why Hegel keeps on repeating the parable of the original sin. Not because he has a particular interest in the questions of religion, among other things, but, more importantly, because he wants to make a certain logical point – namely, that it is neither Adam nor Eve nor the serpent who are to blame for the fall of man, but rather subjectivity (*Subjektivität*) as such.

In fact, it is only through recognition of my own subjectivity, by eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, that I break with the conception of myself as a natural being (*naturliches Wesen*) and that I become the spirit (*der Geist*). To paraphrase the figure of the snake in Hegel's interpretation of the Parable: by rejecting the principle of goodness that lies outside myself, I am similar to God. Not only that I can attain the knowledge of God, but I become God. The subject here functions as the secondary *causa sui*, possessing the absolute spontaneity of something that would parry God. Furthermore, it is only through the "sinful deed", through the opening up of the artificial space for evil – sin because of the sin itself, that God and the idea of the good can be reflected in the first place. Namely, if God is all there is and everything is immersed in God, then the only point of reflection of God is the subject herself. So, the subject and God are in a relationship of mutual determination.

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5   For a more detailed account of Hegel's theory of *Eigensinn*: "the term *Eigensinn* to describe one of the two extremes into which the free will can degenerate; extremes between which the actualization of free will must find precarious balance. On one side we have the danger of freedom remaining too abstract, when a subjects holds the openness of possibilities too dear, when she refuses to make the sacrifice of self-limitation, and thereby remains undetermined and unactualised. The opposing counterpart to this internal pathology of freedom is, however, *eigensinniger* subject. This is a subject who has no qualms about determination, in fact he is prepared to take firm hold of arbitrary determination, as long as it is *his own*" (Hergouth 2024, 162).

Let us sum up the argument we have developed so far. When the idea of the good is conceptualized as a self-enclosed principle in relation to which any form of particularity is and must be external to it, then there is no logical space for evil. Evil is, at best, the form of badness. Badness functions as some kind of distortion of the good itself, but since it lies outside of it, it can be easily reintegrated back onto the level of the principle of the good. In the end, there is only good, pure good, the good itself: naturalized the good. But if this is so, if the good is, indeed, an all-encompassing form of totality, then by either rejecting or accepting such a principle, one is cut off from the possibility of reflecting upon it.

From this it follows, that there needs to be a logical element throughout which the subject can intervene, separate herself from the natural goodness by reflecting upon it. Sin functions as precisely this element, which allows the subject to affirm her own subjectivity, and thus break away with the idea of natural goodness.

Of course, this does not mean that we should take the Bible and go through the list of sins and do all of them – just because we can, but rather that there is a 'logical lesson' to be learned here: a subject does something without a sufficient reason for the sake of her own reasons, which necessarily clash with the idea of natural goodness. However, subject's necessity to assert her particularity does not mean that it hinders the principle of universality of the good, but, rather, according to Hegel, it is the only way in which the principle of good can be completed in the first place.

Evil as Reflection

By separating herself through reflection from the idea of natural goodness, by "becoming evil", the subject makes possible the idea of the good as the overcoming of this separation. In short, if there was not for a subject who has not always already subordinated the good to herself by making it object of her own reflection, no idea of the good would ever arise. This is the crux of Hegel's argument on the "necessity of evil". He writes:

> Abstractly, being evil means particularizing myself (*mich vereinzeln*) in a way that cuts me off from the universal (which is the rational, the laws, the determinations of spirit). But along with this separation there arises being-for-itself and for the first time the universally spiritual, laws – what ought to be. (Hegel 1996, 206)

It is clear how within this structure Hegel allows for good acts, while insisting on the primordial separation of the subject from good. The subject is evil, but is inclined to good acts, that are, however, "not yet in accordance" with the good. The good consists in subject's drive of good[6], in her will to attain the good, so that in this context it is something that is opposed to her particularity. However, in asserting herself as "being evil", she sets up the reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) with this opposition as well. As Hegel puts it: "Evil is the standpoint of the consciousness. Reflection, the division is necessary and must be abandoned at the same time" (Hegel 1996, 123).

The subject can be characterized as evil in so far as she acts according to her own particular will, i.e., with her inclinations, desires and impulses that lurk in her heart: "the selfish is the evil that we call the heart" (Hegel 1996, 134). The content of the good, in this context, must be devoid of the subject's self-interests, since the good she is driven towards is inherently opposed to her own nature. If the subject were inherently good, there would be no need for her to strive to attain it in the first place. Yet, conceptually, the ground of the good must align with what appears within the causality of the subject's own will and thus include her own desires and inclinations.

In short, the content of such good is of various representations of what the good is, while, its principle remains a form of drive. That what is subtracted from different contents attributed to the concept of the good by various subjects, each claiming to have a drive towards it. In other words, the good is that what people appeal to and practice as the good within a particular form of sociality, it is "the common good."

The problem is that her will might be liable to errors. At any point in her pursuit of the drive towards the good, she may discover that the representations of what it means to act well are, in fact, false. This is because whatever she holds to be true, and thus considers good, is gradually coming into her possession. In other words, since her pursuit of the good is posited in the form of an infinite process towards which she strives to, she cannot know exactly what the good is in advance. If she did, the drive towards the good would cease to be a process and, consequently, a drive. In fact, once she reached accordance with the good,

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6   As Vranešević says in this very volume, there is a "structural link between the universal end and the particular will of the subject who decides to strive for the good […] It is only by making a decision, by drawing determinations and purposes out of the indeterminacy of the will that the subject sets in motion the drive of "free will" as self-determination, the drive that animates or brings the universality of thought to the surface" (Vranešević 2024, 76).

she would dissolve as the subject, as the creature of spirit, Geist. As Hegel puts it: "the incongruity (*Unangemessenheit*) cannot disappear. If it disappeared, the spirit's judgement, its vital activity (*Lebendigkeit*) would disappear as well. Spirit would cease to be spirit" (Hegel 1996, 275).

However, if she did not already act as if she knew what the good is, it would be impossible to discern a process of acquiring the good from its sheer indeterminacy. So, in this context, good is something she freely chooses based on her current disposition, a habit, or some other inclination, until she changes her decision in light of some new vantage point that she has acquired. The problem is that she has no solid ground upon which she can evaluate such a decision beyond further contexts, which are, again, brought under by subjective representations and thus something relative. Good and evil are conceptually absorbed into the nexus of subjective representations and the endless processes of their becoming.

But there is one aspect in which the subject may scrutinize her judgment on the good, escaping the nexus of her representations. It may be that the content of her particular will does not give rise to her judgement, but rather the order of reason, for she is the being of reason. Reason does not exclude her particularity; rather, it is this particularity itself. This is what Hegel wanted to convey with the parable of the original sin. The formation of her own particularity, 'the life of the spirit' (*Entstehung des Lebens des Geistes*), does not consist only in the freedom of her own will to choose between good and evil. Rather it lies in her own reasoning, which, structurally, includes the moment of separation, of operating at a distance from any immediate unity and, in this sense, is 'evil'. As Hegel writes:

> it is the consideration or the cognition (*Betrachten selbst*) that makes people evil, so that consideration and cognition [themselves] are what is evil, and that [therefore] such cognition is what ought not to exist [because it] is the source of evil (Hegel 1996, 205).

So, it is important to reiterate, as in Hegel's interpretation of the Parable, that this order of reason is not something external to her, informing and constituting her acts. Instead, it works the other way round. Since reason is what is most peculiar to her as an individual, it functions as a whole and serves as the measure of truth and the good, providing her with an adequate criterion for what is considered good. Therefore, if it turns out that what she believes is good is, in fact, false, she will sooner or later realize it, as no two true beliefs on what is good can contradict each other. By subjecting them to the 'tribunal of

reason,' she will be compelled to declare one of them as inadequate. Moreover, she will recognize that this error does not stem from her reasoning, but, as we have previously outlined, from a habit, a disposition, or some other inclination.

With such an understanding of evil as the reflective capacity of the human subject, the good itself ceases to have a merely representational character; instead, it becomes that which we all can reach through the nexus of our reasoning. Moreover, since the laws of reasoning are binding for all of us—the form of reasoning is what makes the particularity of each and every one of us—the good towards which we have a drive transcends the idea of the "common good"; it becomes universal. Not to will the good, in this sense, means to ignore following the order of reasoning. It cannot simply be that it may or may not be transparent to her, absorbed in her subjective representations, for she is a being of reason and can elevate herself above them. There must always be a present ground that conclusively establishes that her quest for good is right. This means, strictly logically speaking, that the knowledge of the good, confined within "my [own] grounding in me from my own reasons" (Hegel 1996, 123), and the universal good itself, cannot be separated from the first-person view.

Let us try to demonstrate the conceptual consequences of such a view in the case of two different subjects, both claiming to know what the good is. Both form their knowledge of good by exercising the same power of reasoning, and according to the laws of reason, which are binding and universal, they both must be right. However, they each arrive at different conclusions about what good is. So, it must be that one of them encountered an unfavorable set of circumstances, or both did, but each set was different. If they both claim that their knowledge of good is true, yet the contents of what good is are conflicting, then they cannot simply refer to the same 'good'. This leads us to the idea of practical solipsism, where no two subjects can share a common thought.

Evil and its Forgiveness

We concluded our previous paragraph not by answering the question of what good and evil are, but by articulating a certain dilemma in our approach to finding the answer. The dilemma arises from the fact that two subjects, each claiming to possess goodness for its own valid reasons, are in conflict with each other. This implies that we either have to abandon the idea of the subject being the measure of the good, or one of them must be wrong. There is no way

in which two subjects striving for the same universal good can, by the same exercise of reasoning, to arrive at two radically different, even contradictory conclusions.

However, this dilemma is false. The question is not about weighing reasons for or against one of them; it does not require an additional judgement upon their knowledge and a decision on 'who was right.' Instead, it reveals a distorted conception of the subject's relation to good, according to which, as Hegel points out, the subject herself acts as the bearer "of the law and the thing" (Hegel 1996, 193), and evil falls under the domain of her internal set of judgments as well.

Let us expound this point by briefly sketching the example that Hegel presents in the Spirit chapter in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* under the name of Evil and its forgiveness. The initial conceptual situation that Hegel describes is the confrontation of two thought figures, known as the acting and the judging consciousness. He does so from a twofold perspective: from the viewpoint of the one who is pursuing a deed, 'acting good,' while the other is simply reconstructing her deed in rational terms. In short, one is acting, and the other is accounting for the rational conditions that made her act possible, i.e., judging. The conflict arises while both subjects claim to be convinced of themselves as having the knowledge of good, and thus acting as moral subjects, but they do so for different reasons. The acting consciousness does so on the grounds of the practical knowledge she has gained through the act she has committed. With the judging consciousness the opposite is the case: she claims to know what good is on the ground of herself, who, independently of her acts, knows what good and evil are, for she is the tribunal of reason herself. Neither of them wants to give up their convictions and bear upon criticism from the other, for they both claim to have absolute sovereignty over good and evil. Hegel characterizes them both as evil, for neither of them wants to renounce her own particularity and recognize the moment of "objective good, ethical good (das sittliche Gute)" as a crucial, constitutive element of her judgement on good. Eventually, they both break down and admit they are evil. Why? The acting consciousness realizes that once her reasoning on the good is mediated through the act, it too becomes depend on the judgement of the other subjects. The judging consciousness, in a similar vein, realizes that it is only through acting that her knowledge of good can be completed in the first place. This is not to say that she suddenly repents herself by retroactively giving up reasoning in favor of 'just acting.' She is not transformed through a good act in such a way that she gives away her knowledge of good; if she were, she would not be able to

discern what kind of transformation has taken place in the first place. Nor does she seek to diminish herself as the bearer of knowledge of good and evil by recognizing that the limits of such knowledge are intersubjectively posed. As we have said, no such externality is powerful enough to delimit her rational activity from without. In the end, the judging consciousness has managed to turn this externality into her own internal rational process, thus proving her power over it. So, where does her evil come from then? And what do these two individuals, have to forgive themselves for? To put it with Hegel: "It in fact confesses to being evil through its assertion that it acts according to its own inner law and conscience in opposition to what is recognized as universal. If this law and conscience were not the law of its singular individuality and its own arbitrary free choice, then it would not be something inward, not be something its own, but instead be what is universally recognized" (2018, 382-383).

The nexus of forgiveness between one evil individual and another consists in the recognition of letting go of the assumption of one's own particularity as something universal, as the ultimate and final ground of what good and evil are. In other words, the source of evil stems from the idea that the individual is the ultimate and final verification point of the objective validity of the good, with nothing to oppose her reflective activity from without. If this were so, the individual herself would act as the natural force, as the embodiment of natural goodness, with no way to either deny or affirm her judgement, and thus to truly verify it.

Conclusion

In this chapter we sought to identify the sources of evil for finite, rational beings who are perfect in this respect: that they seek truth and good. According to Hegel, no man is evil if he wills evil for the sake of evil itself. This means that in order to will evil, one must first have an implicit idea of the good; that good and evil are mutually determined. In line with this reasoning, the question can be reformulated as follows: what are the reasons that cause our will to turn away from the good? What does it mean not to will the good?

Drawing on the conceptual frameworks of Hegel and Augustine, we have examined some of the possible answers to this question. Firstly, we have described the idea of natural goodness, according to which evil has no positive ontological function. It exists only as a privation of the good. To will evil in this case is simply to will nothing, since evil has no ontological consistency

of its own outside the principle of good. However, as we have shown, such an idea of evil renders the idea of the good itself completely unintelligible – for without evil there is no reflective point through which good itself can be reflected. Secondly, we have delved into the idea of evil having a positive ontological existence through the idea of the particular subject, by virtue of which sin acts as the mediating locus of her subjectivation. Moreover, we have tried to understand how such an evil subject nevertheless realises her drive towards the good. If such a drive is articulated through the content of the representations that subjects possess of the idea of the good, then the good itself cannot ultimately be verified. The problem is that her representations are evolving and constantly changing, since she has no conclusive ground on which to justify her idea of the good. In fact, the good to which she aspires to may be completely deluded. Not wanting the good, in this context, has its source in the lack of stable criteria for what the good itself is; it articulates itself as the opacity within the process of attaining knowledge of the good.

Finally, using the example from the section on Evil and its Forgiveness in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, we have examined the idea of two evil individuals who both claim to possess the knowledge of the good – based on the criteria of reason itself, of evil as being something rational. Not to will good means for the subject to present herself as the ultimate bearer of the knowledge of good and evil. In other words, to will evil is to will her own particularity and impose it as something universal. However, in this context, the subject herself becomes the natural force embodying the natural good, whose principles cannot be rejected or verified since there is no external point of verification.

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Abbreviations

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Part Three
Between Good and Evil

CHAPTER EIGHT

Autonomy and *Eigensinn*
Obstinate Bondsman Earns Honour[1]

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Introduction

Kant's argument for the intertwinement of freedom with autonomy, as presented in *Critique of Practical Reason*[2] can be summed up rather concisely: the empirical world is a world where necessity reigns, and there is obviously no space for freedom within it. Insofar as an acting subject's will is determined by immediate affects towards the empirical world (e.g. desire), the agent is swallowed into this all-encompassing fabric of empirical necessity and is therefore not free. The only way for a subject to be free is if her will has another, non-empirical source of determination – namely reason. Reason deals with concepts, not empirical objects, and to formulate a motivation for action purely on the basis of concepts means precisely to formulate a law. And of course, these laws must also be derived purely from reason and not from any external authority, so that the actions are in fact the subject's *own* actions and not merely her following orders. This is why freedom is for Kant

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1   Eigensinniger Knecht verdient Ehre.

2   In most concentrated form it is articulated in §6 (AA 5, 52).

possible only as autonomy: it needs laws that ensure the subject confronts the world literally *on her own terms*.

Can we somehow relate Kant's understanding of autonomy to *Eigensinn*? The idea behind making this connection will require some justification. After all, we are obviously not dealing with concepts of comparatively equal prominence in work of each author. *Eigensinn*, obstinacy,[3] is a notion that Hegel uses in a few places in his work, and while its use is not quite focused and systematic enough that it would constitute a concept, I will show it is nonetheless – and perhaps exactly because of its relative flexibility – highly significant.

Hegel's uses of the term *Eigensinn* are scattered through his work predominantly with a negative connotation: it describes the rigid, stubborn, unmoving attitude of the individual who refuses to take upon herself the demands of the universal.[4] This mostly means that we are talking about some point of failure (albeit a necessary one) for the development of spirit. He uses it to characterize, for example, the national character of pre-modern Germans, and attributes the failure of the Germans to constitute a state to this trait (GW 8, 238). In *Outlines of Philosophy of Right* he uses the term *Eigensinn* to describe one of the two extremes into which the free will can degenerate, extremes between which the actualization of free will must find a precarious balance (TWA 7, 57/Hegel 2008, 33). On one side we have the danger of freedom remaining too abstract, when a subject holds the openness of possibilities too dear, when she refuses to make the sacrifice of self-limitation, and thereby remains undetermined and unactualized. The opposing counterpart to this internal pathology of freedom is, however, the *eigensinniger* subject. This is a subject who has no qualms about determination, in fact she is prepared to take firm hold of arbitrary determination, as long as it is *her own*: the *eigensinnig* individual "supposes that he is not free unless he has

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3   I find the most common English translation of *Eigensinn* – "obstinacy" – a bit lacklustre. Etymologically it relates to *standing* (in place) and hence indicates a purely passive, reactive attitude. It lacks the reflexive connotation of the German *eigen-*, which is something that matters a lot in Hegel's use of the term, as we will see. In fact, English translators recognized this, and hence *Eigensinn* is not translated consistently: Miller (Hegel 2003), for example, opts for "self-will". In this text, I will use terms "obstinacy" and *Eigensinn* interchangeably, with a preference for the original where grammar allows it with sufficient elegance.

4   To my knowledge, there have been no focused and systematic treatments of Hegel's use of the notion of *Eigensinn*. The philosophical work that awards this term the most prominent position is probably Oskar Negt's and Alexander Kluge's *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (1993). While Hegel is a major reference, the work is ambitious in scope, syncretic and, for lack of a better term, curious. It is definitely something quite different to the relatively precise and contained analysis that I am attempting here.

this will" (ibid.). Or, as Hegel points out in *Encyclopedia* while describing the same duality: the refusal to determine oneself is the lack of character; *Eigensinn* is "the parody of character" (TWA 10, 73).

One circumstance that leads us to think that *Eigensinn* is an incredibly important sort of failure of freedom within the context of Hegel's philosophical system is the fact that the term also makes an appearance at the moment of Hegel's sharpest revision in the development of his thought. In the initial works of Hegel's Jena period, such as the essay *On the scientific treatment of natural law*, or *System der Sittlichkeit*, where Hegel started to assertively differentiate his position from the ethical and political philosophies of Kant and Fichte, he presented the strong conception of *Sittlichkeit*, to which the individual is strictly subordinated, conceptually and politically. However, just prior to writing *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in *Jenaersystementwurfe* from 1805/06, Hegel after all recognizes, against his earlier thoughts on this matter, that the modern individual can *not* after all be successfully subsumed under harmonious ideal of *Sittlichkeit*: the modern individual is too *eigensinnig*, she takes herself to be absolute against the existing universality (GW 8, 239).

There is, however, one exceptional appearance of the notion of *Eigensinn*. It stands out from the others insofar as this occurrence of *Eigensinn* is hardly critical. In fact, it is brought up in a rather approving tone in a place of outright programmatic importance – in the preface to *Philosophy of Right*. This is also the occurrence that is the main source of inspiration for establishing a specific connection to Kant, as it lends important credence to our claim that *Eigensinn* is significantly related to Kantian autonomy:

> It is a great obstinacy (*Eigensinn*), the obstinacy which does honour to humanity, to refuse to recognize in one's disposition anything not justified by thought. This obstinacy is the characteristic of modern times, besides being the distinctive principle of Protestantism. (TWA 7, 27/ Hegel 2008, 15)

We should recognize of course, that at first sight there seems to be little Kantian about *Eigensinn*. Kantian ethics is built on the principle of rational submission to universality. There should be precisely nothing *eigen-* about Kantian moral action. Kant's ethics presents us with many theoretical ambiguities, about where the motivation or the impulse for ethical action could or should come from, but this is not one of them: if *Eigensinn* means an attitude of an agent, where a certain action (or the lack of it) of the agent is motivated purely by it being in some manner specifically *agent's own*, then this does not just fail

to meet the criteria for ethical action, it fails to do so blatantly, and is in fact the contrary principle.

And yet, in the preface to the *Outlines of Philosophy of Right*, Hegel's unfolding of *Eigensinn* – "to refuse to recognize in one's disposition anything not justified by thought" – does ring somewhat reminiscent of Kant's argument presented above, that freedom is possible only as autonomy, that is, as self-legislation grounded in reason. Of course, as Hegel explicitly adds, what he has in mind is characteristic of modern ethicality on a broader level: he traces this obstinate refusal of any external given authority all the way back to Luther. However, we can consider Kant's ethics to be simply the most precisely articulated expression of this modern ethical principle: how to deduce criteria for ethical action based on nothing but pure reason. At the very least it makes sense, therefore, to consider that the characterization "obstinacy, that does honour to humanity" – "*Eigensinn, der dem Menschen Ehre macht*" (ibid.) – covers also, if not exclusively, Kantian ethics.

Now judging from what we have said so far, this seems at first to be a surprising turn, even surprising from multiple directions: it is surprising that Hegel apparently mentions *Eigensinn* with approval. it is surprising that *Eigensinn* is related to Kantian philosophy and, finally, it is also somewhat surprising that here Hegel positively evaluates something that could be seen as a summary of the Kantian ethics.

One way to explain away this triple improbability would be to take into account the fact that we really have no guarantee that Hegel used the term *Eigensinn* strictly as a single concept, and it is reasonable to assume we are dealing with a more flexible notion. The occurrence of the term in the preface to *Philosophy of Right* does seem to be somewhat metaphorically exaggerated. The fact that we are dealing here with *Eigensinn* related to reason, not just mindless individuality, changes a lot. However, we cannot dismiss this repetition of the descriptor *Eigensinn* as meaningless coincidence. So the present chapter will attempt to construct a bridge between Hegel's general disapproval of *Eigensinn* and the programmatic invocation of this term in the preface to *Outlines of Philosophy of Right*. Through an examination of the relation to the notion of autonomy, we also hope to gain a better insight into Hegel's relation to Kantian practical philosophy in the process.

However, the path through Hegel's philosophy that I will chart in order to achieve this is not entirely straightforward. There is still another profoundly meaningful appearance to the notion of *Eigensinn* in Hegel, namely at the end

of the chapter on the dialectic of lordship and bondage in *Phenomenology*. The chapter ends with Hegel's brief mention of the *eigensinniger* bondsman *(Knecht)*, which, as I will emphasize later on, is a distinctive form of bondsman. This is the instance of *Eigensinn* that I will focus on most, as the dialectic of lordship and bondage is a distinctive nexus of Hegel's thought that also stands in direct relation to Kant. In this respect I will be considering two contributions, McDowell's and Pinkard's that explore precisely this connection, and assess their validity, relevance and shortcomings. I proceed with extending the basis of this parallel reading by recounting some crucial steps in development of Hegel's thought in his Jena years leading up to *Phenomenology of Spirit* that decisively informed the passage on the lord and bondsman. Against that background I finally move to a detailed analysis of the passage with a focus on the figure of the *eigensinniger Knecht*. Then I will wrap up this progression by highlighting the role this figure played in Hegel's completion of systemic rearrangements that occurred in the Jena years.

Dialectic of Lordship and Bondage in the Kantian Framework

Now, it is not completely straightforward to see in the dialectic of lordship and bondage a polemic with or commentary on Kant. A violent struggle to the death seems at first sight to have little to do with the problem of following universalizable maxims. One distinctive reading of the dialectic of lordship and bondage that puts it into direct relation with Kant's theoretical philosophy was proposed by John McDowell (2003). McDowell is able to read the chapter in reference to the Kantian framework because he puts emphasis on the place of the struggle within the succession of the chapters of *Phenomenology*. Namely, in the run-up to the "Self-consciousness" chapter, the consciousness has in principle in the progression of the first few sections of *Phenomenology* achieved something close to the Kantian[5] position of transcendental philosophy: the otherness, the ontological independence of empirical objects of consciousness has been abolished, and the objects are now ready at hand *for* self-consciousness.

McDowell takes this as a cue to consider the chapter primarily as Hegel's critical development of the Kantian dualist conception of self-consciousness

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5   To be more exact, the real-world reference for the philosophical position of self-consciousness is very likely Fichte, and Hegel explicitly invokes the formula "I am I" at some point in the chapter (TWA 3, 138/Hegel 2013, 105). But we can consider this close enough for McDowell's purpose and our own.

and not as a lesson in political philosophy, as he perceives the chapter has been predominantly read (ibid., 4). Self-consciousness involves mediation and movement, and therefore a minimal opposition emerges within it: a separation between its subjective and objective moments. Or in other words, opposition between self-consciousness proper as negative unity on one side, and on the other side what is self-consciousness conscious of – that is, the "whole expanse of the sensible world" (TWA 3, 138/Hegel 2013, 105), only that this sensible world is at this point nothing external, but already synthesized into the unified empirical existence of self-consciousness, or "life". McDowell likens this opposition to the Kantian duality of apperceptive self and empirical self. He therefore reads the conflict that develops in the "Self-consciousness" chapter essentially as Hegel's development of this Kantian duality. More precisely, we could say that he reads it as Hegel's argument for the untenability of this duality, as the coexistence of both moments of self-consciousness cannot remain peaceful but gives rise to inevitable conflict. It is impossible to understand the self as *simply possessing* these two moments – according to Hegel, the unity of the self must assert itself in the form of one moment absorbing or negating the other.

This *internal* conflict of self-consciousness is for McDowell *the only* source of conflict in the chapter (McDowell 2003, 8-11). The most distinctive feature of McDowell's interpretation is his curious insistence that the most dramatic image of this section, the struggle for life and death, should be read merely as an "allegory" (ibid., 11) for a conflict – or opposition – that is internal to *one single* self-consciousness, namely precisely the opposition between the apperceptive and empirical selves. What the self-consciousness has set out to abolish is this internal otherness, and so it is prepared to go to war with itself.

To me, this seems an intriguing but ultimately unnecessarily radical interpretation of the chapter. A lot is lost if this scene becomes a mere allegory. In fact, it is hard to see how the dynamics of the struggle that Hegel presents could even develop if we were actually witnessing just an internal struggle of two poles of a single self-consciousness. Most notably, it is not clear how a single consciousness could instil *in itself* the feeling of *fear*, and it is still harder to understand what it would in this case mean for one moment of single consciousness to *submit to the other* for the sake of its own self-preservation. And on other hand, little is really gained with McDowell's interpretative reframing. The internal conflict between two poles of self-consciousness that McDowell wants to see is undoubtedly there – but it is there also in the standard, literal reading of the struggle as a struggle between two consciousnesses. If we read

the chapter literally (and closely), we see that the conflict is in fact doubled, and Hegel explicitly states that when self-consciousness sets out to annihilate opposing self-consciousness (TWA 3, 148/Hegel 2013, 113) its purpose is also, or even primarily, to demonstrate total disregard for its own life (i.e. "empirical self") and to thereby affirm independence of pure moment of self-consciousness. (i.e. "apperceptive self"). However, precisely for this reason the conflict between the two consciousnesses must itself be an actual conflict, not an allegory, and it is hard to imagine an allegorical image that would be intended as an allegory for what is in any case part of this image. The two perpendicular conflicts – the conflict *between two self-consciousness* and *the conflict within single self-consciousness* – precisely lose any sense if they are conflated into one.

So McDowell's interpretation, it seems to me, somewhat recklessly overexploits an insight that is by itself nonetheless valid and sound, namely that the "Self-consciousness" chapter can indeed be considered as Hegel's take on unresolved oppositions that he finds remaining in transcendental philosophy. In the final instance Hegel conveys a diagnosis that the apperceptive self is indeed in conceptual conflict with the empirical self. The pure point of the negative unity of self-consciousness does not lend itself conceptually to be smoothly attached to some determinate empirical being. It is only through the experience of a struggle to the death that this conflict is somewhat forcefully resolved, as the apperceptive self abandons its claim to independence.[6]

But McDowell's reading does not quite exhaust the potential for readings of Hegel's dialectic of lordship and bondage informed by fault lines of Kant's philosophy. Our concerns in this chapter are in any case more related to practical philosophy, and so it will be useful for us to consider the contribution of Terry Pinkard, who presented a reading of dialectic of lordship and bondage that puts it into a particularly close relationship with the Kantian problematic of autonomy.

Pinkard's idea is that struggle for recognition[7] is supposed to present the beginning of Hegel's solution to what he calls the "Kantian paradox" (Pinkard

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6   Today, in less violently heroic times, this problem of the relation of the apperceptive and empirical selves becomes perhaps most acutely apparent in the form of the existential question "Why am I exactly this I, this particular being?", which we have to admit one usually poses in precisely those circumstances where one's existence is not under immediate threat.

7   This nexus of Hegel's thought has been of course a very attractive object of inquiries and interpretations (for some other prominent ones, see Honneth 1996, 2008; Pippin 2000; and Kojève 1980).

2002, 226), the paradox of – to put it briefly – what law rules over the action of adopting/following laws. There seem to be only two options: either this legislative action is lawless and hence not free, or it must lead to infinite regress, where the subject's adoption of any law requires it to be grounded in some higher law. The problem seems to call for an agent to split herself into two (ibid., 227). This splitting into two is of course precisely what happens in the "Self-consciousness" chapter, and that is the core component of Pinkard's argument for such parallel reading. The inequality of consciousnesses that will be the result of the struggle for recognition will produce two actual separate instances of consciousness: one subordinated to the other and therefore susceptible to legislation. Of course, this development is not meant by Pinkard to directly resolve the paradox of autonomy: at this point the problem is solved simply by removing the pretence of autonomy on the side of the subordinated, acting consciousness. However, according to Pinkard this provides the principle, or at least the setting, of the resolution. It points to how Hegel's solution to the Kantian paradox is essentially *social* – the splitting of the subject into two and the struggle for recognition are crucial conceptual moves towards that resolution. With the dialectic of lordship and bondage, the stage is therefore set for the eventual historical resolution of the paradox: the state of subjugation will eventually be overcome and the two consciousnesses will act as instances of authority *to each other* in a relation of equal, mutual recognition. Then the subject will be in a position to consider the laws she follows as her own.

Now we should note that this account is not uncontested. Sebastian Rödl (2019, 96-97) argues that this explanation fails immanently, and thus fails on the very terms it has set itself. It does not, according to Rödl, actually succeed in resolving the paradox, but only conceals it within the relation of two consciousnesses: if one consciousness is unable to give itself authoritative laws, then neither can it grant another consciousness the authority to do so. Instead, Rödl argues that the articulation of the paradox itself is a misunderstanding of Kant. If Kant is properly understood, there is no *act* of self-legislation, separate from law-following, and self-legislation is a transcendental description of *the form* of submission to the law. If giving oneself the law is not itself an action, a paradox does not occur.

So is the Kantian paradox a relevant assessment and criticism of Kant? The answer is not straightforward. As Tobias Rosefeldt (2023), for example, notes, Kant himself at times admitted the existence of Kantian paradox, or at least felt compelled to address this potential problem in the idea of self-given laws, such as in *Metaphysics of Morals*:

> One can also bring this contradiction in light by pointing out that the one imposing obligation (*auctor obligationi*s) could always release the one put under obligation (*subiectum obligationis*) from the obligation (*terminus obligationis*), so that (if both are one and the same subject) he would not be bound at all to a duty he lays upon himself. This involves a contradiction. (AA 6, 417/Kant 1991, 214)

Furthermore, the solution Kant offers at this point is not completely satisfactory. Kant avoids the paradox by affirming the strict difference between the legislating and law-abiding instance *within* the agent, which is precisely the distinction between the noumenal self and empirical self. The risk here is, however, that this solution introduced a relation between acting empirical self and legislating noumenal self, that is precisely *heteronomous*. We are then back were we started, the paradox of autonomy was solved for the price of covertly getting rid of autonomy altogether!

However, Kant does not fall into this trap in all presentations of his practical philosophy. In *Groundwork for Metaphysics of Morals*, unlike in *Metaphysics of Morals*, he is more careful to convey and emphasize the crucial element of the idea of autonomy: if autonomy is to have any sense *there can precisely be no separation between legislation and action*. There he even prefers to use the formulation (also highlighted by Rödl in his argument) that the will "*is* its own law" (AA 4, 440/Kant 1998, 47), which is notably something else than the *subject giving herself the law.* In this manner the paradox is avoided, and in fact we seem to get a notably different theory, where it is not really the agent that is autonomous, but the will itself.

However, the question we have to consider as it is most relevant for our purpose here, is not so much whether Kantian philosophy necessarily falls into the trap of the Kantian paradox, but how adequately does the Kantian paradox in fact describe *Hegel's assessment of Kant*. Does it provide an adequate framing for understanding of struggle for recognition and dialectic of lordship and bondage, as Pinkard intends it to?

As mentioned above, it is not readily apparent that Hegel's treatment of lordship and bondage is particularly closely related to Kantian problems – even if we accept McDowell's framing of the chapter as responding to, essentially, the issues deriving from Kant's theoretical philosophy, it is still another step to consider it a response to the problems of Kant's practical philosophy. One could have some doubts about this, as there are places in *Phenomenology* which are much more definitely, almost explicitly, about Kant. Moreover, the

Kantian paradox is *not* the most prominent reproach that Hegel repeatedly and famously levels at Kant. That would instead be the reproach of "empty formalism".[8] Hegel's argument is that the Kantian principle that the maxim of moral action should be universalizable without contradiction, and is by itself insufficient to provide guidance for any determinate course of action to the agent – nothing but tautologies can be produced by law of non-contradiction alone. Hegel famously attacks Kant's own example of a deposit, and states that Kant's argument that supposedly proves the contradiction of keeping and disavowing of a deposit that only the current possessor knows about cannot in fact be derived solely from the law of non-contradiction, but instead relies on a presupposition that is itself unaccounted for, namely the institution of property. No logical contradiction arises in keeping the deposit if we simply ignore the validity of the institution of property, and there is no logical necessity for the institution of property. This argument of Hegel's already appears in the *Essay on Natural Law* and it persists in his thought in some form all the way to *Philosophy of Right.* But more importantly for us here, it appears also in *Phenomenology of Spirit,* albeit not quite in in the context of dialectic of lordship and bondage. It appears in the section "Reason as testing laws" and represents the moment of passage from the "Reason" to "Spirit" chapters (TWA 3, 322).

But interestingly, that same section, "Reason as testing laws", also contains a passage that *does* bear the structure of the Kantian paradox argument: Hegel also makes a point that laws that bind the subject cannot be questioned or tested by their subject in any way, because if they were that would already mean that they are posited as something conditioned by the subject, and therefore they do not truly and immediately bind the subject. Simply put, "[They *are*], and nothing more" ([*Sie* sind], *und weiter nichts*) (TWA 3, 321/ Hegel 2013, 261). According to Hegel, such a simple unmediated giveness is the only possible mode of giveness of the laws if they are to be truly unconditionally binding for the subject. This argument represents a move to necessity

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8   For an overview of the debate see Geiger (2007) or Stern (2012). If we sum up what is relevant for us here, it appears that while Kant could be defended against Hegel's charges, but only at the cost of retreating from the stronger claims ascribed to him by Hegel. That is, it regardless of how accurate and charitable Hegel's critique is if we measure it against Kant's actual thought, it does appear to hit its mark with reference to what Hegel wants to get from Kant: a theory that would generally provide determinate guidance for what qualifies as good action in concrete situations. See also Ganzinger in this volume: "the unfolded formalism charge concerns the contradiction in the will test because it contains a tension between Kant's insistence on acting from duty for the sake of duty and the requirement to act on a particular, obligatory end" (2024, 50), and Kobe's different reading, for whom "the formality of the moral law thus merely points to a structural weakness that lies in Kant's overall conception of reason" (2024, 107).

of the immediate unity of *Sittlichkeit*. However, it is not entirely clear form the text whether this is intended by Hegel as a self-standing argument by itself, because immediately afterward he proceeds to extend this argument by reiterating, as mentioned above, the critique of the example of a deposit, an instance of an "empty formalism" objection to Kant.

Hegel's critique of Kant in the "Reason as testing laws" chapter therefore seems to be a combination of the two arguments: he allows, as Kant intended, that the principle of non-contradiction is indeed a principle that is binding to the subject. However, Hegel's critique is that this is far too weak a principle to provide any useful determinate guidelines for action, i.e., anything more than tautologies. In order to make it work, further presuppositions – that are themselves not justified by the law of non-contradiction – have to be introduced (such as the existence and validity of the institution of property). These presuppositions, however, *do* fall to the challenge of the Kantian paradox, as they cannot be at the same time self-given and truly binding.

To sum up our findings up to this point: a convincing argument can be made that the chapter on self-consciousness and dialectic of lordship and bondage in *Phenomenology* is in fact a development of the Kantian structure of the self, as proposed by McDowell (but in a way that does not require ascribing to a single-consciousness thesis). Additionally, Pinkard's suggestion that, in essence, Hegel's philosophy – and that in *Phenomenology* in particular – can be summed up as an attempt to solve the Kantian paradox, does have some merit as an explanatory (and hence simplified) synopsis of Hegel's philosophy. However, the precise manner in which he constructs this simplified synopsis leaves a lot of open questions. First, there is Rödl's critique that the solution as Pinkard articulates it really does not work on its own terms. And apart from that, Pinkard's shortcut is perhaps too short to have an optimal explanatory value. Effectively, his interpretation connects the beginning of the "Self-consciousness" chapter with the end of the "Spirit" chapter of *Phenomenology*, which makes one wonder what to do with the incredibly complex and sometimes perplexing development that happens in between, especially considering the fact that some version of the Kantian paradox makes an appearance at a specific point in the course of this development. Pinkard's account does not really explain this, so it seems that an alternative, perhaps slightly more complex approach, would be informative.

In order to achieve that we should look closer into the development of Hegel's thought in the period preceding *Phenomenology* in order to uncover more clearly how the criticism of Kant informed his philosophical position.

Systemic Place of Struggle for Recognition in Hegel's Jena Thought and the Emergence of Obstinate Individuality

One instance of Hegel's criticism of Kant stands in a prominent place in the *Essay on Natural Law*, and it is one that Hegel will repeat often in his later work: the criticism that the principle of non-contradiction and the universalizability of the maxims of Kantian ethics cannot bring about determinate action. The solution Hegel offers – and this is one of his signature moves – is the notion of *Sittlichkeit*, a concept that condenses the thesis that actually existing, acting subjects can only be understood as belonging to a pre-existent social totality, which pre-equips the subjects with given ethical laws (TWA 2, 464).

In subsequent Jena works Hegel switched to the method of immanent development of the system, and explicit references to works of other philosophers are mostly hidden, so traces of this criticism of Kant become to a certain extent obscured. However, it is not hard to pinpoint the precise place where Hegel attempts to overcome this same problem with the means of immanent development of the system. The way Hegel begins to construct his system involves a transition from the abstract treatment of individual consciousness that is developed all the way to the level of *Sittlichkeit*. In order to effect this passage, the logic of struggle for recognition is employed. Before *Phenomenology*, however, Hegel's argument about the struggle for recognition had already concluded with the point that it is impossible to achieve recognition in this manner. If the two self-consciousnesses clash with the aim of achieving recognition, they necessarily fail. Either both or one of them perish in the struggle – and there is no recognition as there is no one left to recognize or be recognized. Or one of the combatants surrenders – no thus recognition is possible either, since the surrendering self-consciousness is in no position to grant it. In early Jena texts, this argument is already sufficient for Hegel to make a systemic move to the level of *Sittlichkeit* (or, as he will soon start to call it, *Geist*). Isolated self-consciousness that claims to be absolute can only attempt to achieve recognition in struggle, at which it necessarily fails. Therefore there already has to be a pre-existing social structure, transcendental with regard to self-consciousness, that creates the conditions of possibility for recognitive relations (GW 6, 221). So, in support of the pertinence of a parallel reading of the struggle for recognition and the Kantian topic of autonomy, we can note that they occupy the same systemic position in Hegel's Jena thought – in both cases we are dealing with a failure that introduces the necessity of the passage to *Sittlichkeit*.

But this is not all. By the time he was composing *Phenomenology*, Hegel was facing an additional task. In the *Jenaer Systementwurfe 1805/06*, arguably the last truly big revision in Hegel's socio-political thought occurred. In spite of all the emphasis on the primacy of *Sittlichkeit*, modelled on the ancient Greek *polis*, which was defining feature of his thought in opposition to his contemporaries, he finally accepted that modernity irrevocably introduced the absolute value and right of the *individual*: "[everyone] comes to this obstinacy, that separated from existing universality, he is nonetheless absolute" – "[*jeder*] *zu diesem Eigensinne kommt, vom daseienden Allgemeinen abgetrennt, doch absolut zu sein*" (GW 8, 239).[9]

This means he took a step back from his initial programme announced in *Essay on natural law*, that proposed the conception of individual as necessarily immediately embedded in *Sittlichkeit*. Instead he now conceded that in modernity the individuality comes into its own right and rules as a supreme principle. This necessarily involves a loosening of hold of *Sittlichkeit* on the individual. The individual cannot at the same time consider herself absolute *and* immediately belong to *Sittlichkeit*.

At this point of development of his thought, Hegel thus ended up once again with the individual subject as the basic building block of his political philosophy, which is something that had been until then an eminent target of his criticism. Now he must somehow reintegrate the individual in his system, so as to not completely concede his project that he has been so far describing as "*System der Sittlichkeit*". This is also the point of a proper entry of the concept of *Geist* in Hegel's philosophy. Hegel sees that he must construct some looser form of synthesis of the individual and the social structure, now mediated instead of immediate. Immediate unity of *Sittlichkeit* is supplanted by mediated unity of *Geist:* "But a higher abstraction is necessary, a., a bigger opposition and culture (*Bildung*), a *deeper* spirit (*tieferer Geist*)" (ibid.).

The introduction of absolute right of individuality in his philosophy was not possible without sacrifices. In this theoretical decision, Hegel's youthful political ideal – namely more or less Rousseauean political ideal of a republican,

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9   It is difficult to adequately render the minimalist meaning of the German *doch* in English. "Nonetheless" in a way already says too much, as the implication is that the individual would be without question "absolute", if she were *not* "separated from existing universality". This is decidedly *not* the case, as that would be just the strong conception of *Sittlichkeit*, which Hegel is here abandoning, where the individual is seamlessly blended into universality. I propose a reading – which I believe *doch* enables – that the individual is absolute precisely *because of* and simultaneously *in spite of* her separation from existing universality.

egalitarian, militant political unity[10] – fell apart. Absolute right of the in-dividuality, that is, a total sovereignty of the individual over herself, was for Hegel incompatible with individual's participation and empowerment in the political system. For Hegel, this is a necessary trade-off: One can be "in line" with community and participates in its political life – but only insofar it is the community that is absolute, and she as an individual is not. If individuals are absolute for themselves, on the other hand, they cannot come together in any kind of harmonious political community and are hence barred from political life proper. Therefore, somewhere around this point, immediately prior to the writing of *Phenomenology of Spirit*,[11] Hegel moves away from republican egali-tarianism and moves towards much more liberal, but notably less democratic political model.

In the subsequent passages and fragments from the 1805/06 Jena lectures we can get some idea of what Hegel was thinking about next. His task was now to somehow integrate this newly introduced absoluteness of the individual into a coherent political unity, and we have seen that the harmonious egalitar-ian merging of *Sittlichkeit* is now impossible. This is no easy task, a fact that is openly on display at this relatively crude stage of the development of the system, when Hegel is still searching for ways to resolve this newly revealed opposition. We can gather an image of what further conceptual adjustments he deemed necessary as a consequence of the changed status of individual in the following rather fragmentary sidenote:

> its self not in laws customs – […] – gives up its existence – another world – as his own knows – in actuality only comes this externalization (*Entäu-serung*) in view – this absolute universality stands precisely in opposition to immediacy. (Ibid., 239)

Here it is not hard to glimpse a preview of the topics that will go on to consti-tute large parts of *Phenomenology*, namely the chapters on unhappy conscious-ness and the alienated world of *Bildung*. It is a glimpse of all the efforts that the consciousness will have to go through in order to overcome this separation from universality that emerged.

However, the most significant hint for our present task appears a couple of pages later. After he explicitly distances himself from the conception of the

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10   See for example Lukács (1976).

11   The shift is clearly already detectable in *Phenomoenology*, with its powerful critical account of French revolution, which is also quite explicitly a critique of Rousseauean general will (TWA 3, 432/Hegel 2013, 357).

Platonic state (which still served as an entirely endorsed reference in the *Essay on Natural Law),* Hegel explains in a straightforward manner that this newly acquired individual freedom is something entirely internal:

> the freedom of individuals in their immediate existence is lost, but their inner – freedom of thought – is retained. The spirit has been cleansed of immediate existence, it has entered in its pure element of knowing (*Wissens*), and is indifferent towards the existing individuality. (Ibid., 241)

First, let us note how the troubling and conflicting nature of the entry of the individual into Hegel's system is clearly stated here: mere moments after Hegel introduces modern individual freedom, his solution is to radically limit this freedom to the realm of thought – individual is free only insofar as she is indifferent to her existing (*daseiend*) individuality. Second, this is a formulation that very clearly foreshadows what will in *Phenomenology* be described under the label of *stoicism* (TWA 3, 155/Hegel 2013, 119), which of course appears directly as a resolution of the dialectic of lordship and bondage. We can take this as another piece of evidence that the dialectic of lordship and bondage is indeed directly intertwined with Hegel's attempt at resolving the problem of modern individuality.

With that in mind, we next look at dialectic of lordship and bondage passage in *Phenomenology* more closely, and see what it reveals in light of this pre-existing tension within Hegel's attempts at the construction of his philosophical system.

Eigensinniger Knecht

In *Phenomenology*, Hegel's exploration of the struggle for recognition and the resulting lord-bondsman dynamics goes further than in his preceding works. As in earlier texts, struggle fails to lead to mutual recognition, but now this is not the end of the story. There is one possible outcome of the struggle where we get something conceptually interesting, even though recognition fails. It is the outcome where, instead of fighting to the end, one consciousness is shaken to the core by the realization of its probable impending death: consciousness makes an additional step of reflection and realizes that the independence it intends to prove is not more essential to it than life itself, which it stands to lose. Therefore, consciousness forsakes its independence and accepts its subordinated position in relation to the victorious consciousness (which did not make this step of reflection). The subordinated consciousness – the bondsman – is now compelled to confront the world not in a relation of abstract negation,

but in determinate negation of the labour of formation. And through labour it forms itself as well. Unlike the passive lord, who remains stuck in the abstract negation of enjoyment of the world, the bondsman becomes the bearer of further development of spirit, the source of spiritual innovation of how to cope with its subordinated position.

However, what will be of most interest to us is that at the end of the chapter an often overlooked figure appears – the figure of the *eigensinniger*, the obstinate bondsman:

> If it has not experienced absolute fear but only some lesser dread, the negative being has remained for it something external, its substance has not been infected by it through and through. Since the entire contents of its natural conscious ness have not been jeopardized, determinate being still in principle attaches to it; having a 'mind of one's own' (*der eigene Sinn)* is self-will (*Eigensinn*), a freedom which is still enmeshed (*stehenbleibt*) in servitude. (TWA 3, 155/Hegel 2013, 119)

This is rather surprising. Judging from the general direction of the argument regarding the bondsman, this passage is generally overlooked. But it seems to be the case that Hegel here in fact describes an *additional* figure, an alternative image of the bondsman at the outcome of the struggle for recognition. The wordplay *eigener Sinn – Eigensinn* is ostensibly a reference to an earlier statement:

> Through this rediscovery of himself by himself, the bondsman realizes that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence (*nur fremder Sinn zu sein schien*) that he acquires a mind of his own (*eigener Sinn*). (TWA 3, 154/Hegel 2013, 118)

Here, *eigener Sinn* still refers to the proper, progressive development of the figure of the bondsman: it denotes a reversal, where it turns out that *Sinn* in fact belongs to the labouring bondsman, not the commanding lord. In some cases, however, it appears, that this development is not completed and *eigener Sinn* degenerates into *Eigensinn*.

Eigensinn therefore appears here as a descriptor of the *false bondsman* or *insufficient bondsman*. Hegel seems to allow that even if the struggle ends with capitulation and submission, it is still not completely necessary that the submitting consciousness will assume the kind of attitude that will be fruitful for the progression of *Phenomenology*. Instead, he allows that a bondsman might capitulate even if he had not experienced liquefying "absolute fear (*Furcht*)", but only "some lesser dread (*einige Angst*)" (TWA 3, 155/Hegel 2013, 119). In that case,

the experience of defeat and submission has not been quite so transformative. The bondsman's submission remains tactical, strictly an exchange of independence for life. The submission is not so total that it would include an effective erasure any feeling of injustice. This bondsman obeys – more or less – because he has to, but does not think he *should*. He takes all the freedom that he can get, albeit within the bounds of servitude. This is clarified by Hegel as the figure is brought to our attention again at the beginning of in the following chapter and compared to the evolved version of the progressive bondsman, the Stoic:

> Self-will (*Eigensinn*) is the freedom which entrenches itself in some individuality (*Einzelheit*, translation modified) and is still in bondage (*innerhalb der Kechtschaft steht*), while Stoicism is the freedom which always comes directly out of bondage and returns into the pure universality of thought. As a universal form of the World-Spirit, Stoicism could only appear on the scene in a time of universal fear and bondage, but also a time of universal culture which had raised itself to the level of thought. (TWA 3, 157/Hegel 2013, 121)

So what is the reason why we encounter this figure of the *eigensinniger knecht* here? He does not truly move *Phenomenology* forwards, he is a dead end figure, just like the lord, but the latter is at least indisputably a necessary counterpart to the bondsman, whereas the obstinate bondsman is an unproductive sidestep. If anything, with the appearance of this figure Hegel himself admits that developments in and around the struggle for recognition are not truly conceptually self-sufficient, since they rely on some level of "empirical contingency" as to how the bondsman will respond to his situation.

It probably would not be wrong to theorize that the figure of the obstinate bondsman serves for clarification: he is evoked to emphasize, by way of contrast, what is the most important feature of the true, progressive bondsman in his role as a vehicle of the development of spirit, which is, evidently, the abandonment of *Eigensinn*. But nothing would be clarified if this assumption of an *eigensinnig* attitude would not be a *real* option for the bondsman, and this is a significant addition to the interpretation. It fact, we could even surmise that this partial, *eigensinnig* mode of submission is the *more natural* choice, the more straightforward option for the bondsman. On the other hand, it is only in a "time of universal fear and bondage" (ibid.), that is only within a totalizing, all-encompassing (Roman) empire, which leaves no room for escape and where there are no alternative systems of justice (where one could imagine not being a bondsman) in sight that the bondsman has no other choice but to submit fully, with stoic indifference.

Eigensinn is thus a conservative option for the bondsman, the path of least resistance. It is an attempt to salvage as much as possible from the unfortunate situation in terms of power relations. In a sense, self-consciousness has been *eigensinnig* from the start – except that its *Eigensinn* was so all-encompassing that it made no sense for it to be named us such (or, alternatively, it was too all-encompassing to be noticed). Nothing existed for self-consciousness except as a temporary resistant object, whose independence was soon to be denied. But then self-consciousness met its match, some Other that it decided could not be overcome and this Other therefore became an authority that demanded submission. Then self-consciousness could only retain its striving for independence as *Eigensinn* proper, as *Eigensinn* implies the existence of some *Sinn* that is not *eigen*, as a rebellious independence within subordination, the impulse to save as much as possible, "freedom that entrenches itself in some individuality" (ibid.; translation modified). Hegel in principle says that the bondsman here cashes in too soon on the limited sovereignty that he establishes over material world by virtue of work.

Read with this emphasis, Hegel in fact pre-emptively blocks all the too direct Marxist appropriative readings of lord-bondsman dynamics. Yes, the bondsman emerges from the struggle for recognition with a good starting position for ultimate mastery of the world through the formative effects of labour, but it is crucial for the continuation of *Phenomenology* that he – namely the true, progressive bondsman – does not come to awareness of this and instead takes on himself the full weight of servitude, which pushes him into universality of thought.

This emphasis accords well with the point Zdravko Kobe (2015) has made regarding the outcome of the dialectic of lordship and bondage. According to the widespread view, the bondsman has been merely a reactive victim regarding his own servitude, which was in fact a consequence of a certain deficiency on his part, an opportunistic cowardice, with which he sacrificed his independence, and the rest of *Phenomenology* lays out a path for the bondsman to regain his courage. But as Kobe points out, there is more to the bondsman's gesture. It requires an active sacrifice, we can say a certain courage, to abandon his independence, which the lord could not muster (ibid., 844). This nuance in interpretation becomes clearer when we recognize that Hegel does in fact leave some essential room for manoeuvre to the bondsman. A passive defeat in the struggle by itself is not enough, a historically progressive bondsman *makes himself* through his own decision.

Systemic Function of the Notion of *Eigensinn*

But our examination of the state of Hegel's systemic project immediately prior to *Phenomenology* gives us an additional insight into the strategic conceptual function of the struggle for recognition. Hegel has faced conflicting pressures on how to adjust his system after he accepted the absoluteness of the modern individual. Before *Phenomenology*, the systemic function that the struggle for recognition played was solely to disturb the self-sufficiency of the individual and immerse her into *Sittlichkeit*. But in the new setup that is more accommodating to individuality, it seems that the individuality of the original, natural state of self-consciousness must also somehow be preserved or carried over into the next stage of the system. In parallel, on the political level, the introduction of the *eigensinnig* individual for Hegel immediately precludes any simple egalitarian and democratic political solution – direct and seamless immersion in universality is now impossible. Therefore, a necessary consequence is that the political form that is able to accommodate *eigensinnig* individuals must involve some form of political subjugation. It is systemically beneficial, or even essential, that the struggle for recognition in *Phenomenology* produces this much more complex situation than before. In this section, I will attempt to give a more exhaustive picture of this dense and convoluted nexus of Hegel's thought: what transformations occurred in the system of Hegel's arguments and positions at the time of writing *Phenomenology*, and why.

We can approach this by tackling a notable puzzle concerning the structure of *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the course of *Phenomenology*, we run through history three times, even though we are dealing with seemingly necessarily linear conceptual development. Hegel's explicit guidelines for how these historical time jumps should then be conceived are not the simplest thing to grasp. Regarding the relation of the first two courses though history – the first in the "Self-consciousness" add "Reason" chapters, and the second in the "Spirit" chapter (we will leave the third course in the "Religion" chapter aside here) – we learn that the "Self-consciousness" and "Reason" chapters are supposed to be "abstractions" of more concrete forms of Spirit (TWA 3, 325/Hegel 2013, 264). But at least at one point this explanation seems somewhat lacking. Namely, if we proceed in reverse historical order we can readily see how the analyses of action in the "Reason" chapter are correlated with the movement of enlightenment at the level of Spirit. We can see how the stage of unhappy consciousness is correlated with the alienated world of Christianity in the Middle Ages and how stoicism and scepticism fit together with apolitical

legalism of the Roman Empire. *However, the correlation between the beginning sections of the two courses through history appears far more mysterious.* What exactly is supposed to be the relation between the struggle for recognition and dialectic of lordship and bondage in the "Self-consciousness" chapter and the ancient Greek *Sittlichkeit* in the "Spirit" chapter?

The conclusions of both chapters lead to the historical situation of the Roman Empire, but it is difficult to find any analogy between the two transitions: they seem to be describing two different social/political/spiritual transformations. The ancient Greek ethical life is a supposedly harmonious immediate community that turns out to be blemished by an internal contradiction which dissolves it. The dialectic of lordship and bondage starts from a rather primeval state of non-social consciousness – we would not be far of the mark if we described it as a state of nature – and leads immediately to the state of total subjugation, characteristic for the Empire. It is not clear where there could be a conceptual-historical space for the beautiful and immediate ethical life of Greece in this transition. The Greek episode seems to be incompatible with both of these forms of consciousness at the beginning of the "Self-consciousness" chapter, and at the same time important and distinctive enough that it is surprising to see it abstracted away or jumped over in the first sequence of historical forms of consciousnesses.

The explanation for how these two historical sequences can fit together that makes the most sense to me is that in the Greek ethical life we in fact briefly witness *the society of collective lords*. There were also slaves in Greece, after all, which is something Hegel persistently leaves out of his accounts of the "beautiful ethical life". In the more standard, non-philosophical, "materialist" socio-historical accounts of antiquity, the Greek and (early) Roman societies are after all not so radically different, and it is a remarkable and distinctive feature of Hegel's philosophy of history that one of the biggest historical ruptures happens in between these two historical episodes. This is possible because this rupture is strictly correlated with Hegel's switching the perspective of his account form the position of the ruling class (the whole development in the Greek chapter of *Phenomenology* takes place not just among the nobility, but entirely among royalty, and this seems conceptually necessary as in no other social position could the conflict between universality and individuality manifest itself so acutely and hence destructively) to the position of the subordinated classes.

Still, such an account leaves enough ambiguities (for example, is the internal differentiation that Hegel nonetheless ascribes to the Greek *Sittlichkeit*

– which is the cause of its undoing, after all – a variant of the lord-bondsman relationship or something else?) that it demands additional explanation on a metatheoretical level. We can trace it to the same developments of Hegel's thought that were outlined above. In short, here Hegel was working out how to bring together two of his different pre-existing lines of thought.

In previous Jena systems, we find an argumentative transition that proceeds directly from the struggle for recognition and its failure to the stage of *Sittlichkeit*. However, the true conceptual origin of the notion of *Sittlichkeit* seems to be anchored in Hegel's critique of Kant, which is how his argument proceeded in the *Essay on Natural Law*. In *Phenomenology* we then find an interesting, but still rather perplexing, combination of these two ideas. The progression from the failure of the struggle for recognition to *Sittlichkeit* is here interrupted by an exploration of the dialectic of lordship and bondage and the sequence of forms of consciousness that follow from it. Then, at the end of the "Reason" chapter, this sequence ends with consciousness almost explicitly on the position of Kantian practical philosophy ("Reason as giving laws" and "Reason as testing laws"). As we have seen above, at this point the progression we know from the *Essay on Natural Law* is repeated: reason realizes that self-legislation is impossible and that therefore a new and altogether different account of its development has to be given, one that takes into account that reason has all along been part of a larger, more concrete structure: spirit.

This means that the first part of the "Self-consciousness" chapter – the description of self-consciousness and the dynamics of struggle up to the fateful combat – should then be understood to be situated strictly *before* the emergence of spirit. Then, with the resolution of combat and establishment of lordship and bondage, spirit is in fact already established, but we – and spirit itself – do not yet know it. Instead, we are launched into a succession of partial self-recognitions of spirit, partial insofar as they pertain to the subject that still does not know itself as spirit, but understands itself in opposition to it. That would mean that at this point *Phenomenology* adopts a self-similar structure on two levels, where the "Self-consciousness" and "Reason" chapters as a whole stand in the same relation to the chapter on "Spirit" as every form of consciousness within the sequences stands to the next. It is only with modernity that this misrecognition is sublated. In support of such a reading we can note that the experience of the standpoint of reason at the end of the "Reason" chapter already very closely resembles the experience of spirit of itself as presented at the end of the "Spirit" chapter.

Hegel's progression in *Phenomenology* is therefore structured by both pressures: to uphold his criticism of Kant and to construct an alternative to it. Schematically, we could then explain why Hegel proceeds the way he does in the following manner. In the last instance there are only three different basic possibilities for how to conceive of the *submission of subject under some order*. One is Kantian autonomy: self-imposed submission under the order of reason. The second is Hegel's initial answer of *Sittlichkeit*, where the subject is always-already and constitutively belonging to the order. Criticism of the first option in favour of the second has been a persisting and characteristic feature – perhaps *the* characteristic feature – of Hegel's political philosophy. However, somewhere along the way, as we have seen, Hegel recognized that such an immediate unity of subject with the order does not adequately describe the modern subject, and so this strong version of the idea of *Sittlichkeit* was relegated from the status of a general theory of the subject to the status of a transitional historical form.

The third possibility is the only one that is left, namely a completely external submission of subject to the order, that is, a submission that happens as a result of violence and/or a threat of annihilation. Obviously, this is far less appealing. A political philosophy that aims at some sort of progressivism and conceptualization of freedom should provide something better than this. Nonetheless, this is where Hegel must begin: if the order neither originates in the subject nor the other way around, then the subject and the order must initially stand in an entirely external relation. The best we can expect then is to show how through a process the subject can gradually come to recognize itself in the order, which is broadly speaking the path of Hegel's (mature) political philosophy.

The necessary first step of such a process is to show that it is somehow possible to overcome this purely external relation between the subject and the order, which is not only a situation of blatant unfreedom, but philosophically uninteresting and seemingly static – unless it were possible for the submitting subject to abolish any internal distance to this external order, which is precisely the distinction between the *eigensinniger* bondsman and progressive bondsman that subsequently evolves in the figure of the Stoic.

We have seen in §3 that the appearance of the individual in the 1805/6 Jena system was somewhat paradoxical: the moment Hegel admitted the modern, *eigensinnig* individual into his political philosophy, he also needed to neutralize it as much as possible – he quickly (re)moved it into the non-threatening

realm of pure thought or knowledge. However, the formula of "freedom of thought" (GW 8, 241) (as opposed to actual freedom) was at this point still a source of potential ambiguity. The interpretation that first comes to mind is simply the dissociation of mind from the physical reality of the body in the world – "thinking one's own thoughts" regardless of what one does with the physical body. This might seem at first sight to conform to the formula of stoicism, but it also conforms to the definition of *eigensinnigkeit* – and we have seen that these two are precisely (and decisively) not the same.

Hegel's task in *Phenomenology* was therefore to establish and justify this distinction within the label of "freedom of thought". This can only be clarified at the conceptual level of the logic of universality and individuality, which can also be read – to conclude the conceptual story arc we have been building here –as a pointed reworking of the Kantian framework.

At the start of the "Self-consciousness" chapter, self-consciousness exists prior to the distinction between the universal and individual: the individual is for herself immediately universal, insofar as it is abstract negation of the sensible world, or at least no other universal exists for it. We have seen with McDowell that this picture can be taken as Hegel's rendering of the outcome of transcendental philosophy. Except that, and this is the Hegelian twist, this entails that the abstract negation is *active*, an act of negation, that is destruction/consumption – and this attitude, according to Hegel, merits precisely the label of "desire" (TWA 3, 139/Hegel 2013, 105).

The problem of Kantian ethics in general can be conceived of as a problem of individuation:[12] how does it occur that that the impersonal universal judgement "x is good" transforms into the action of *this* individual that "I do x". Kant's explanation involves a differentiation of faculties and the argument that the faculty of reason, which is inherently universal, can, in the competition for the role of the determining ground of the will, win out against the lower faculty of desire, which is contingent and empirical. So there is another dimension to the "Self-consciousness" chapter if we read it with reference to Kant. We could describe what Hegel does as *intellectualization* of lower faculty of desire. He reframes desire and its conclusion in consumption as the operation of abstract negation. Not only that, Hegel also claims that as long as we are dealing strictly with pure self-consciousness, this abstract negation is in

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12   I take the idea for this framing from Christopher Yeomans (2015). However, Yeomans proceeds in a different manner and in his juxtaposition of Hegel's and Kant's practical philosophies focuses on the notion of *virtue*.

fact the *only possible* relation of self-consciousness in relation to the empirical world – "self-consciousness is *Desire* in general (*Begierde überhaupt*)" (ibid.).

For Hegel, then, the whole problem has the opposite direction than for Kant: it first needs to be explained how the individual even finds herself in this complicated relation to universality. The internal moral drama, characteristic of the Kantian practical subject, in fact requires much more complex setup of presuppositions. It seems that violence needs to be involved in order to splinter individuality from universality. Up until this point, there is no split between acting and judgment, which means an individual's inclinations are immediately also the right thing to do. This split is what occurs in the struggle for life and death, and in the subsequent capitulation and submission on the part of one of the combative consciousnesses: the losing consciousness must concede that it is something individual that is not at the same time the sole independent instance of universal annihilation of the empirical world. *Universality is now elsewhere*. This is the condition for the emergence of (merely) "existing universality (*daseienden Allgemeinen*)", to use an expression we encountered in the 1805/06 Jena system, where it accompanied the introduction of the modern *eigensinnig* individual as its necessary counterpart (GW 8, 239).

On the other hand, what the consciousness which has gone through the truly liquefying, transformative fear of annihilation has gained in this experience is a perspective on abstract negativity *from outside*, so to say: this consciousness has found itself in the position *of the object* of potential annihilation. Unlike the victorious consciousness, defeated consciousness has now had the experience of abstract universality *as its object*, and at the same time, inversely, experience of itself as one of the objects about to be annihilated. To have such an experience of itself as an object means adopting a perspective external to one's individuality, that is, according to Hegel, "to *think*" (TWA 3, 156/Hegel 2013, 120) (the outcome McDowell wished to see is thus in fact reached, but not through quite the same mechanism as in his account). What we are dealing with here should more precisely be described as *freedom in thought*, as opposed to (*eigensinnig*) "freedom *of* thought". And to be clear, the thought here is not merely a medium into which consciousness retreats when things do not go well in actuality: thought in fact only emerges *as a result* of leaving individuality behind.

The consciousness therefore faces a choice at the conclusion of the struggle for recognition. There is a necessary trade-off between universality and individuality: the obstinate bondsman retains the standpoint of individuality,

but for the price of universality, while the progressive bondsman forsakes individuality and submits to universality. And as this movement of *abandoning* individuality is here necessary, however fleeting, obstinacy is in fact a necessary (side)step in the development of consciousness. The obstinate bondsman plays precisely the role of the *evanescent*, *necessarily premature* appearance of the individual in the *Phenomenology*.

Conclusion

What have we then learned about relation of Hegelian *Eigensinn* to Kantian autonomy and how is *Eigensinn* involved in any Hegelian solving of the Kantian paradox, if at all? The account I provided in this chapter ultimately differs substantially form Terry Pinkard's (2002). While I remain in agreement that solving the Kantian paradox is indeed an informative framework for understanding Hegel's *Phenomenology*, I believe a more complex account is necessary to adequately explain the intricate structure of the book. Above all, Pinkard's simplification that through the struggle for recognition and lord-bondsman relation another consciousness becomes the source of validity of the law, seems to me to be a major oversimplification, given that the topic of the relation of two consciousnesses at that point in fact simply disappears from *Phenomenology* until the end of the "Spirit" chapter. As I argued in this chapter, the key conceptual result of the struggle seems to be instead that it *dislocates* the consciousness, that it introduces a split between individuality and universality and therefore triggers a complex dynamics of consciousness coming to terms with this separation. The account presented here also avoids Rödl's critique, as it does not rely on mutual recognition as a guarantor of the validity of laws. However, the conclusion I offer in exchange is more or less that Hegel simply does not resolve the Kantian paradox as understood in the strong sense of autonomy of the agent (I leave aside the Rödl's and Rosenfeldt's defence that recasts the notion of autonomy as autonomy of the will, as this does not seem to be the way Hegel reads Kant).

Hegel persists in his disagreement with Kant that there is no immediate and unproblematic passage from universality (law) to individuality (action). When such a pretence reoccurs in *Phenomenology* at the level of spirit, at the moment of French Revolution, the result is once again a destructive short circuit of the self-relation of spirit, structurally similar to the first appearance of self-consciousness – immediate self-negation. I suggest that the programmatic

statement *Eigensinn, dem menschen ehre macht* (TWA 7, 27 /Hegel 2008, 15) from *Outlines of Philosophy of Right* is an indication that this remains so even in Hegel's mature political philosophy, and it indicates how the subject's relation to order is never entirely or smoothly resolved.

The analysis of the obstinate bondsman presented above provides some delimitations on how the formula "the obstinacy (*Eigensinn*) that does honour to humanity" (ibid.) should be read. It becomes clear, for example, that the emphasis here is *not* that *Eigensinn* by itself is the defining principle of modernity. Rather, *Eigensinn* that is accompanied by *honour* is. With the direct connection between *Eigensinn* and the dialectic of lordship and bondage we established, the use of the word "honour" becomes more significant. Honour is after all something that is very much at stake in the struggle for recognition. The position of the obstinate bondsman is precisely a position that is *not* honourable. The lord has a certain straightforward, somewhat ignorant sort of honour. He was the one who was prepared to go to the end in the struggle, as were of course all the unfortunate participants in the struggle for recognition who actually did go to the end and perished along with their opponent. Then the true, progressive bondsman has a certain honour of the second degree – honour in the *sacrifice* of the lord-type of honour. Only the obstinate bondsman is the one who neither sacrifices anything nor risks sacrifice, and therefore there is little honourable about him. So the modern *Eigensinn* should be read as a species – unlikely, oxymoronic species – of *Eigensinn* in general: the species with honour. And note that only with distinct Hegelian emphasis on *Eigensinn* does this differential role of honour make any sense. Otherwise our culture can quite readily accept that to be obstinate (not surrendering, staying true to oneself, etc.) is generally honourable in some romantic sense.

This would make little sense if being *eigensinnig* in the modern sense would be easier than not, if it was the path of least resistance – as was the case with the obstinate bondsman. That the *Eigensinn* of modernity *does* merit honour apparently stems from the fact that *Eigensinn* is now not immediately self-referential, but disciplined and mediated through the medium of universality – thought. Of course, Hegel is hardly giving a *carte blanche* here as far as the political self-determination of the modern individual is concerned. His applauding of "*Eigensinn der dem Menschen Ehre macht*" (ibid.) appears at the very end of the preface to *Grundlinien* and follows a long rant aimed precisely against unrestrained appeals to political reality based on subjective ideals. "*Eigensinn der Ehre macht*" is instead supposed to characterize a much more restrained, patient theoretical approach of coming to terms with actuality, such

as the one he himself displays. And yet, it is still *Eigensinn*. The use of such a politically and morally charged label to describe an essentially theoretical approach cannot be overlooked.

What distinguishes so qualified an *Eigensinn* with regard to being "not willing to recognize in one's disposition anything that is not justified by thought" (ibid.) from autonomy in the Kantian sense of freedom as submission to rational, self-given practical law, condenses Hegel's final reception of Kantian ethics. The difference between the two precisely indicates Hegel's contention that political life cannot be completely reduced to morality. The terms of participation in political collectivity are not such that they could be expected to be completely internalized by the individual. The word *Eigensinn*, unlike autonomy, implies the existence of some external instance, against which one is *eigensinnig*: *Eigensinn* has an outside, a context from which it separates itself. It would not make sense to speak of "not being willing to recognize what is not justified through thoughts", if one would not be regularly enough presented with actual injunctions for such recognition, not all of them legitimate. That is, the individual's striving towards rational internalization and integration of principles that she is supposed to follow is never finalized into a seamless integration in the order within which she as an individual would immerse herself. At least a minimal difference is preserved, so that the individual's compliance with the order is still *her* compliance, her individual act. Modern *Sittlichkeit* is characterized by the perpetual agonistic duplication of universality. There is no guarantee that the opposition which accompanied Hegel's introduction of the *eigensinniger* modern individual "separated from existing universality, he is nonetheless absolute" (GW 8, 239) is ever resolved. *Eigensinn* describes an individual's immediate claim to universality. However, in the process of actualizing this universality she must inevitably confront and somehow come to the terms with "existing universality (*daseienden Allgemeinen*)" (ibid.). The Hegelian version of autonomy is thus combative and conflictual.

We have to imagine a conceptual spectre of the obstinate bondsman still present in the background of the modern *Eigensinn*, somehow along with the true bondsman-like submission to the order of reason. Instead of a stubborn, thoughtless affirmation of individuality as a coping mechanism *within* the actual subordination – the bondsman's obstinacy – the modern subject submits to the universality of thought, but universality of thought itself is employed in service of the affirmation of individuality – a submission, but a *submission against*.

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TWA 3   ——, 1986. *Werke in zwanzig Bänden, Bd. 3. Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

TWA 7   ——, 1986. *Werke in zwanzig Bänden, Bd. 7. Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

TWA 10   ——, 1986. *Werke in zwanzig Bänden, Bd. 10. Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften III*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

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Catastrophe and Totality
The Idea of Humanity in the Face of Nuclear Threat and Climate Catastrophe

Marcus Quent

Asking about the good means asking about the end. Or, to be more precise, relating an individual action or practice as such to the question of the good means placing it in the perspective of the end. In the end, the good is what is worth striving for. With our actions and deeds, we want to correspond to it or help realize it. Whether as a norm or as an objective, the good is what we strive for; it is where we wish to arrive. However, the endpoint of fulfillment, which one might associate with the question of the good and discussions about "means to an end," no longer seems to prevail. There has been a tectonic shift that goes back to what Adorno once called the "fall of metaphysics" and the subsequent transition to a so-called post-metaphysical epoch, when the question of the good was transposed to the investigation of language games and communicational procedures. Furthermore, with regard to the end as objective, when the public imaginary refers or relates to an end today, the end predominantly appears in the form of self-destruction or self-annihilation. Asking about the end is not so much about aims and purposes, questioning the historical progress in realizing the good, but about doom. So when in the contemporary world action is presented or experienced as necessary or required, it is no longer primarily projected as a potential

articulation or realization of the good, but rather as a means of *preventing an end*. Today, with climate change or, more broadly, ecological transformation, what is hoped to be prevented is a full-scale extinction that destroys the possibility of human (and non-human) life and that is therefore imagined as an end of the *possibility* of action itself: an end of all possible realizations of the good. Thus, in the present, action is necessary or required because an end must be prevented, and it seems to be an end that can no longer rendered in the perspective or framework of the good.

The relation to the end in the framework of prevention is not connected with the expectation of a coming fulfillment or a set of actions as realizations of the good, but rather with the affect of fear. It is not an end we want to arrive at, but one that scares us. Now, the end that we fear seems to bring with it mechanisms of disavowal and repression. These defense mechanisms, in our preventative relation to the end, are accompanied by the experience that it is no longer possible to conceive *destruction itself* as the means of realizing a utopian good. One could say that in the twentieth century there was a dominant conception of destruction as the main operator leading to a political impasse. The century, as Alain Badiou has pointed out, thought of negation primarily as destruction, and of destruction in itself as a creative force, as a means of *realizing the good end*. If we follow Badiou's diagnosis that at the beginning of the twentieth-first century, after two centuries of revolutionary politics, "a sort of crisis of the trust in the power of negativity" (2014, 45–55, 46) is becoming apparent, then this even more urgently raises the question how the relation between the end, the operation of negation, and the good can be conceived today in a situation where a certain dialectic of destruction seems exhausted, while we are facing total destruction.

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To begin with, we should not forget that if today it is common to relate to climate catastrophe as a form of total destruction, a quasi-apocalyptic event that threatens human life as such, then it does not really introduce a radical novelty. Already in the mid-twentieth century, in the midst of the Cold War with its imaginary of nuclear doom, human life as such was experienced not only as mortal but as "killable" (Anders 2018, 270). In this context, the German-Austrian philosopher and essayist Günther Anders, for example, spoke of a "potentiated mortality" (Anders 1981, 171) as the key novelty brought by the atom bomb: not only are the individual members

of the species mortal; the species itself is now mortal. Therefore "our" time is interpreted and depicted as an "end time" marked by the threat of the end *of* time *itself* (ibid., 203–206). With the "deadline" introduced by the nuclear threat, Anders argues, our fundamental relation to time has radically changed. Time is no longer a medium for events, for actions realizing the good, nor is it a "conditional form" in the Kantian sense.[1] It has become something conditioned, namely by peace. Since the "end time" is not an epoch, not a period of history followed by another one, for him, "our" time becomes indistinguishable from time as such, time in general. In the end time, at the end of days, that which takes place *in* time and time *as form* coincide. But if that which takes place in time, the conditioned, and time as a conditional form coincide, then what collapses is *historical temporality*, time as history. History itself, as a horizon of events and meaning, becomes mortal, beyond the lifetime of the individual. Historical time then is no longer a meaningful process of becoming and passing, able to potentially integrate each process of becoming and passing. What appeared as the collective singular of History, which we were used to conceptualize, with Reinhart Koselleck or Niklas Luhmann, as the novelty of a *temporalization* of time,[2] paradoxically becomes a finite part of itself.[3]

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1   Ibid., 204. For Kant, time and space are "pure forms of sensible intuition," that is, forms that are given without concept and contribution of understanding. While space is defined as the "outer sense," Kant determines time as the "inner sense," that is, consisting of pure intuitions of our inner state. The transcendental ideality of time, as a *subjective* condition of sensible intuition, is thereby at the same time supposed to have empirical (not absolute) reality, that is, it is supposed to have equally *objective* validity for sensibility, insofar as it is at the same time the mode of representation of myself as object. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 155–192, esp. 164.

2   "Time is no longer simply the medium in which all histories take place; it gains a historical quality. Consequently, history no longer occurs in, but through, time. Time becomes a dynamic and historical force in its own right. Presupposed by this formulation of experience is a concept of history which is likewise new: the collective singular form of Geschichte, which since around 1780 can be conceived as history in and for itself in the absence of an associated subject or object" (Koselleck 2004, 238).

3   For Anders, the atom bomb implies a "metaphysical metamorphosis" because it introduces a death without survivors. With universal annihilation as "real non-being," ontology is said to come to itself for the first time. One could thus describe Anders' activist engagement in this "metaphysical metamorphosis" as a work of *pre-memorializing* (Anders 1981, 174, 177).

On the level of temporality, a threatening end thus has a *unifying, totalizing* effect – in a strange way similar to the absolute good itself. But even if, with respect to the conditioned character of time, change is no longer imaginable, because the "end time" is itself without beginning and end – in the sense of a period of time, which always allows another beginning and end to come – the end-time activist still passionately calls for a change. *One must act*, because the preservation of the world, a continuation of it, through the prevention of its end, can only be accomplished through radically changing it. The emphatic "now" of the deadline connects past and present end-time activists: it is an attempt of pointing out an impossibility precisely to render action possible, the conscious use of this paradox. But here we are dealing with an intricate situation. The transformative force ultimately remains ambivalent, because it seems that to preserve the whole you must change it, and at the same time while changing it you can never really change the structure of this very whole. One could then ask: What is the power and scope of such change? What is a change that preserves a whole precisely by transforming it? What is a change that is never able to alter the whole in its structure? Or, to put it differently: What is the relation between *change*, *preservation*, and the *whole* in the "end time" that is conceived as "deadline"? And can the radical change preventing the end of the world be a *good* end?

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The relation of the destruction of the whole to its preservation, which entails the urge of radical change, draws our attention to the role of negativity in the first place. If Hegel is right in that the emancipation of humans only proceeds through an appropriation of the "tremendous power of the negative," (Hegel 1977, 19) then the possibility of catastrophe is not reason's other, but inherent in it: in its own realization, reason exposes itself to destruction, to death. This means that one cannot simply contrast preservation and survival with destruction and extinction from the outset. The French philosopher and writer Maurice Blanchot connected and actualized this thought in dealing with the atom bomb, which rendered possible the total (self-)annihilation of humankind in the Cold War. In response to Karl Jaspers's radio lecture and book *The Atom Bomb and the Future of Man*, from 1958, Blanchot published a short essay that is still challenging for contemporary discourses of the end or current apocalyptic modes of speech. Instead of using the threat of the atom bomb only as leverage or "alibi" (Blanchot 1997, 101–108: 103) to enforce already existing political positions and traditional existential values – as Jaspers did – Blanchot approaches the atom bomb as a "problematic event" for thinking (ibid., 105).

For Jaspers, the "total extermination" of the atom bomb and the "total domination" (ibid., 104) of communism were two coequal threats. In "The Apocalypse is Disappointing," a short essay from 1964 directed against Jaspers's book, Blanchot considers the atom bomb rather as an enigmatic, ambiguous event. It challenges humanity in its totality, but at the same time – this is his bold hypothesis – through it the idea of this totality becomes conceivable and affirmable as such for the first time (ibid.).

With the atom bomb a negative relation to totality is established. Humans acquire a destructive power over the whole, which as power, however, only indicates an unmastered possibility, a probability. The nuclear apocalypse is said to be "disappointing" because it refers to a power that man does not appropriate, and which Blanchot therefore characterizes as a *negative* power. It indicates a power "that is not in our power" (ibid., 106) because the subject of this power does not yet exist – as a whole. If the subject of this power existed, instead of merely its objects, this power would no longer be feared, he claims. Against inflationary discourses of a self-destruction of humanity, he objects: "This humanity, capable of being totally destroyed, does not yet exist as a whole" (ibid.). It is divided into the rulers and the ruled. Because one can confirm the idea of humanity for the time being only "after its disappearance and by the void, impossible to grasp, of this disappearance," he draws the conclusion that humanity is "something that cannot even be destroyed, because it does not exist" (ibid.). Consequently, in a Hegelian fashion, for Blanchot it is a matter of *elevating* the fact of the annihilation of humanity to the level of a concept, and "empty negation to negativity" (ibid., 107). This means transcending the register of *understanding* towards *reason*, in order to produce the whole. Blanchot develops the remarkable thought that humanity becomes affirmable only by the event of the atom bomb and in the form of the potential *disappearance* of humanity. He subsequently transforms the abstract and negative idea of the whole into a provocative argument for communism, which has yet to be invented. In doing so, the essay is structured by the fundamental Hegelian operation, the negative power of understanding, which is distinguished from reason:

> The power of understanding is an absolute power of negation; understanding knows only through the force of separation, that is, of destruction – analysis, fission – and at the same time knows only the destructible and is certain only of what could be destroyed. Through understanding, we know very precisely what must be done in order for the final annihilation to occur, but we do not know which resources to solicit to prevent it from occurring. What understanding gives us is the knowledge of catastrophe, and what it predicts, foresees, and grasps, by means of decisive anticipation,

is the possibility of the end. Thus man is held to the whole first of all by the force of understanding, and understanding is held to the whole by negation. Whence the insecurity of all knowledge – of a knowledge that bears on the whole. (ibid.)

Blanchot's essay is challenging because in it the end or the apocalypse is no longer simply something one hopes for or something one is afraid of. It confronts us with a paradoxical implication of communism as the totality of a realized humanity. Only in humanity's free decision to appropriate the possibility of its own total annihilation does this humanity generate itself as an autonomous collective subject. In other words, the "apocalypse is disappointing" if it remains without a subject. In the face of its own destructive power, which at the same time proves its powerlessness, humanity could find itself "being awakened to the idea of the whole," becoming aware of its wholeness and giving it a form "by organizing and uniting itself" (ibid.). Here the potential catastrophe becomes the flipside of a unifying totality; the potential annihilation of the world appears as the moment of its creation. Blanchot radicalizes the paradox of the possibility and impossibility of change by dissolving the opposition of unification and annihilation of humanity, bringing both close together, almost merging them. The realization of reason and total annihilation form a strange, uncanny alliance.

In Blanchot's essay, totality is, strangely, that which has always been at work and, at the same time, the idea to which one must still "awake." Despite all polemic, this is a point that he shares with Jaspers. But at the same time it implies the difference between the two, because for Jaspers there is an absolute split between understanding and reason, whereas for Blanchot, reason realizes itself in the negative force of contradiction, "through antagonism, struggle, and violence" (ibid., 107). In its extreme form, reason – which is already at work, in the process of its own realization – must expose itself to the danger of annihilation. Yet, as Blanchot writes, reason is still waiting for its own realization, and in this continued deferral it degrades itself in the face of understanding. So one has to ask: What is the nature of this strange relation between understanding and reason, the anticipation and postponement of unification as the absolute good? How do both faculties affect the unification of humanity, which is at stake in an apocalyptic present? In answering this question, one should not be distracted too much by Blanchot's apparent polemic against Jaspers. After all, slogging through Jaspers's tome shows one thing: Some elements of Blanchot's radicalized line of thought are already laid out in it.[4]

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4   As an example: "Maybe God wanted the bombs to fall so that humanity in its present form would be destroyed by them. [...] The cipher that God wants the survival of humans under all circumstances seems unbiblical and unphilosophical to us". (Jaspers 1982, 352, 354).

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One of these elements is the temporal ambiguity in the concept of humanity. On the one hand, humanity becomes a whole through the all-encompassing nuclear threat that affects it as a whole. As a threat that concerns the totality of mankind, it also generates humanity as a – negative – whole. And since the whole of mankind is threatened "in its existence," the whole with which it is to unite thus seems to be prefigured by the threatening event. (Jaspers 1982, 62) On the other hand, however, in the demand for rescue the "unity of humanity" appears, as Jaspers puts it, as an "idea demanded by reality itself" (ibid.). "Only reason can unite humans in the whole of their being" (ibid., 290).[5] For the Christian liberal, the idea of unity, the salvation of the whole, calls for *human rights* as their specific expression, as the "common, inviolable ground" whose renewing realization is yet to be accomplished. The salvation of the whole is founded in a coming "community in human rights," which appears as its realization. (ibid., 62) For the twisted Hegelian thinker of communism, on the other hand, the idea of unity is articulated dialectically, "through antagonism, struggle, and violence." In some sense, unity is not the opposite of antagonism but is already at work in certain antagonisms. The oscillation of the concepts of humanity, totality, and unification, however, is characteristic for all who think about reason in the nuclear threat. In Anders, too, the unification of humanity, which can only be prepared by a sharpened "resolution" to radically refuse to cooperate, is anticipated by the bomb: "What religions and philosophies, what empires and revolutions have failed to accomplish: to really make us one humanity – it [the bomb] has succeeded" (Anders 2018, 342). Humanity is unified by the threat of the bomb, as a humanity that is not only the object of total annihilation, but is given a minimal agency insofar as it is described as a struggling subject. In this struggle it is already united, and for the first time "really" – even if this is the dubious figure of beings about to die: "As morituri we *are* now *we*. Really, for the first time" (ibid.).

If we consider this movement in Blanchot, Jaspers, and Anders, we can state that "humanity" is always both at the same time: the threatened whole of human life and its wholeness, totality, or unity as an idea that *transcends* life. Because this idea of the whole, and with it human reason, is yet to be realized

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5   Armando Manchisi makes a similar argument in this volume about the role of the idea as such in Hegel: "reality regarded not as an aggregate, but as a unity in which the parts realize themselves by having the whole as their own end" (2024, 32).

– with and against understanding, beyond it – it must at the same time be opposed to all positions that presuppose it as given or already existing, (Jaspers 1982, 108) that is, against abstractions that dismiss the ideal part of the whole. Now this endeavor is not so simple, because the idea itself cannot be kept free from these abstractions at all times. On the one hand, any reference to a given universal subject is accused of deceitful anticipation: One polemicizes against the self-accusatory form of a tragic unification found in a "hero of the negative" (Blanchot 1997, 106); one denounces the suppressed division between perpetrator and victim, which levels the ideal part of the whole; one exposes the vane mixture of power and powerlessness in the talk of a "suicide" of the species, and so on. But on the other hand, where the technical feasibility of destruction calls for the realization of reason, this realization always appears to be in some way prefigured or already realized to a certain degree. It is as if a kind of pre-empting is required to be able to introduce the ideal part of the whole. So from the very beginning, the relation to the whole must be given as twofold, as contradictory, having always been split into understanding and reason, in order to be able to envision the realization of the whole at all. The Bomb and the Idea, understanding and reason, are attached to one another and compete as forces of unification, as agents of unity. It is a permanent oscillation of the unifying force, already effective here and now and at the same time lacking, still. Humanity, like the apocalypse, is a figure that is already here and yet still to come. The wager of philosophy is to realize reason in a forcing together of both temporalities with the help of the atom bomb – to conceive of the nuclear apocalypse *as* the apocalypse of reason.

The unification of humanity must always take place *twice*: once *externally*, as a unification that is an effect of understanding, which extends the possibilities of both destructive and preservative technology, but which is more registered by it than enacted through it; and once *internally*, as a unification that is assigned to man, realized by reason, and supposed to take place at the origin of man's forgotten being, to which it ultimately leads back (in Jaspers), or "through antagonism, struggle, and violence," by which reason articulates itself (in Blanchot). Yet, and this is the difficulty, a unification that appears twice is nothing other than the point of a distinction, the act of splitting. At the very place where unity is at stake, difference insists; where One is wanted, it appears twice. As far as the production of unity is concerned, with the twofold unification, difference is inscribed again and again. It is a difference that resonates with one inherent in the humane itself, which is founded on the distinction between the merely

living and the essence resting in itself, which transcends all that is living in order to overcome this distinction in a coming unification.

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In all this, the power of understanding remains ambivalent. Understanding brings about the technical possibility of destruction, while at the same time it is being used to prevent its realization. It enforces technology as a destructive process and intervenes in the technical means to restrain it. Understanding furthermore potentiates the knowledge of the negative to "total knowledge" (Jaspers 1982, 411–412). It thus puts what is known into the perspective of doom, because it is only able to foresee the negative,[6] while as a demystifying force it dispels any thought of potential doom. To put it differently, understanding as a faculty is a technique that makes self-destruction possible *and* confines it according to a plan; a knowledge that grasps the negative, with the calculation of all probabilities, *and* rejects negativity as the impossible. Blanchot comments:

> What takes place, finally, is both disappointing and instructive. Reason, in anticipation of itself and immobilized by this anticipation, seems only to want to win time, and, in order to win time, passes off to the understanding the task that it is not yet able to master. (In such a way that the caption that would best illustrate the blackboard of our time might be this one: The anticipation of reason humbling itself before understanding.) Understanding is cold and without fear. It does not mistake the importance of the atomic threat, but it analyzes it, subjects it to its measures, and, in examining the new problems that, because of its paradoxes, this threat poses for war strategy, it searches for the conditions in which the atomic threat might be reconciled to a viable existence in our divided world. This work is useful, even for thought. It demystifies the apocalypse. (Blanchot 1997, 108)

Understanding brings the possibility of absolute self-destruction, which it disenchants and demystifies. This explains why all attempts that declare cognition, knowledge, and science to be the basis of a political program for radical change are doomed to failure. Because in the end understanding always prevents the shock it is supposed to prepare or cause in this process. Wherever understanding refers to doom, it must also normalize it as a demystifying faculty. Understanding is destructive, related to the destructible – and yet its

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6   "Understanding can foresee only the negative (except what it may be able to 'do' itself), and therefore always sees only the downfall" (ibid., 390).

negative force resonates at times with the "original feeling of life" (*ursprüngliches Lebensgefühl*),[7] the impulse of life to hold on to itself, with self-preservation, which interrupts or blocks the relation to "elevated" negativity. So this at least can be learned from Jaspers: the institution of science is not suited to be the guiding force for the change of the whole.

As a negative power, understanding refers to time as a measure of destruction and delay. Its linear temporality is that of calculation, probability, and prognosis, which always both stirs up and calms down, mobilizes and sedates. Reason, on the other hand, appears as timeless, always connecting duration and point, interval and event. Its vertical temporality is that of memory and leap. Its "any time and today" establishes a timeless actuality, a time without measure.

Perhaps one can compare the step Blanchot takes beyond Jaspers and Anders with the step taken by Hegel beyond Kant. It is a minimal step, yet it makes a difference to the whole. Ultimately, what is at stake is the question of the status of that excessive, immanent-transcendent force called reason, the question of its relation to understanding, to knowledge, to history, to time. In Jaspers, as in Anders, reason remains an instance sharply set off from understanding, which, although it affects everything in reality, has no place in it. Reason is an instance that is supposed to permeate everything, but cannot be planned, organized, or institutionalized. It is everywhere and nowhere. There is no way from understanding to reason; one must leap from one to the other. With Blanchot, on the other hand, reason is already effective in the struggles of the present. It works and unfolds itself in conflicts that transcend the individual. And the realization of reason's unification remains precisely a question of *organization*.

If there is, as in Jaspers, no safe way from understanding to reason, if reason rather presupposes itself, and if the link between the two is the affect of fear, a shock which is supposed to initiate a rebirth, then the event of the potential total annihilation forces a decision on man, who has to prove whether he is worthy to continue to exist. His potential annihilation would ultimately be nothing other than a just, divine judgment on a "humanity" that has failed in the renewal of its essence as an "idea demanded by reality itself." At the

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7   "I admit that I can make only effective in my heart for moments what understanding inevitably tells us about the probability of doom. I must shake myself awake from the tendency to forget. There is something in us that resists due to an original feeling of life (*ursprüngliches Lebensgefühl*). We live, in fact, as if that downfall would be impossible. We gladly allow ourselves to go back to the beautiful happiness of the affirmative existence. We do not give it away, even if we tear ourselves out and glimpse it in the deep shadow" (ibid., 466).

strangest moments in his essay, Blanchot now brings this annihilation closer to realization – almost to the point of their indistinguishability. The cryptic nature of his text consists in the fact that annihilation itself appears in some passages as a figure of this realization. He seems to allow a speculation in which potential annihilation coincides with the idea of humanity. It is as if this thought, at once abysmal and strangely empty, marks the zero point of the attempt to *realize* reason. It represents perhaps nothing other than the *gag* of this text: something that one can only laugh at but cannot relate to, because it simply gets stuck in one's throat.

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Today the means of accurately determining the deadline are increasingly precise. It is as if the mind even registers and examines its own prospective end. What was once the biblical portent has taken the form of sober calculations; universal extinction becomes the object of techno-scientific modeling. The deadline acquires an overwhelming, almost suffocating effect, increased but at the same time also demystified by our refined ability to calculate. Yet perhaps the deadline as such has never been anything but an operation of understanding: By generalizing and de-temporalizing time, understanding tries to appeal to reason, but it succeeds only in the form of a de-limitation of itself. Ultimately, with the refined measurement of the deadline, understanding falls back on itself to take the place of reason.

While the deadline of the nuclear threat is an indeterminate, unlimited, and virtually endless one – the form of time itself – the deadline in climate change or ecological transformation appears to be quantifiable and determinable. The end is rendered as the ultimate form of time, yet becomes temporally determined, finite again. Does this quantifiable and determinable time thus represents an even greater degradation of reason before understanding – or, in contrast, is it part of a recovery of historical time? To put it differently: Is measuring the deadline the last, sad triumph of understanding, which cannot stop, as it were, to dissect and to determine? Or is it a reclaiming of historical time in the de-temporalized and supra-temporal deadline, an attempt to re-generate a new historical time in the timelessness of the deadline? Are the status reports, for example, which are periodically compiled and publically presented, promising signs of an "awakening" of reason, evidence of the efforts related to scientific analysis and its social mediation – or are they mere articulations of the self-degradation of reason? Is the focus on calculating and

modeling our contemporary figure of this degradation – or is it a step towards reason's "awakening"?

These might be the wrong questions. What distinguishes the temporalities of the two catastrophic events thought to be the end of humanity is this: While one unfolds in a few seconds or minutes, the other appears as a series of processes and events that extend over long periods of time. While the one can be linked to an initiating action that is associated with an identifiable subject, a consciousness, a decision, the other is a disparate sequence of more or less quasi-subjectless actions that only becomes recognizable as a unified structure of action with the help of scientific analyses, data collections. Ecological transformation confronts us with a whole cascade of effects that can be traced back to a variety of actions and habits. Nevertheless, we seem to tend to imagine both events as punctual, as finality. But the sharp contrast between their respective temporalities is also somewhat misleading. After all, the advent of the bomb refers to a long history of technology as its condition, while the expansive process of climate change, as we now know, is accompanied by event-like "tipping points" that bring it closer to the bomb's modality. Processes that extend over decades, centuries, the prolonged and gradual changes, thus acquire an element of suddenness that was previously associated with the advent of the bomb: points of unpredictable tipping that reveal the whole of accumulated behaviors and habits.

The crucial question, however, is: How can one "awake" to the idea of the whole when this whole seems to anticipate itself as a quasi-natural accumulation of effects? How can reason realize totality when the whole seems to delay itself by its processuality and thus evades appropriation in the form of what Blanchot called a "decision"? How can one produce, create, or found the totality or whole of humanity in the face of the catastrophic series of events that are subjected to an automatism, the logic of the effect, rather than a subjective "resolution"?

Alenka Zupančič, in an article on Blanchot, argues that his perspective of a whole presupposes an external standpoint from which this whole appears as such. The external point of view is temporalized in Blanchot through the threat of apocalypse. However, according to Zupančič, this is no longer our apocalypse. Our apocalypse – climate catastrophe – no longer has to do with a perspective that is oriented towards the loss of the whole in a single, incomprehensible event, and from this point of view envisions the realization of the idea (Zupančič 2017-18). Compared to the threat of an action represented in

the image of a single dramatic pressing of a button that triggers a nuclear catastrophe, the situation of the climate catastrophe is different. It is a different temporality of the catastrophe: "The wrong button has already been pressed. The apocalypse has already begun and is about to become an active part of our lives and our world as it is" (ibid., 24). We are then already in the midst of the apocalypse. It is no longer a future event from which we could draw the shape of our whole, and which in turn could be prevented by the awakening of reason. It is already here, already unfolding.

This shift must influence all end-time activists, playing the role of the "prophylactic apocalyptician" (Anders 1981, 179) who sees his function primarily in wanting his announcement of the apocalypse to be falsified. The performative announcement of the apocalypse, for Anders, and recently revisited by Bruno Latour (2017, 217–218), pursues a single aim: to prevent it. But this shift must also influence the decision that Maurice Blanchot conceives as the construction of a collective subject in the potential annihilation, as the moment in which humanity "awakens" to the idea of its totality, and thus to reason. The question then is: Does the temporal logic of the "deadline" still function, with its emphatic "now," as soon as the apocalypse is something that is already happening? Can reason still "awake" in the appropriation or elevation of the negative power? Can one still produce the whole by a "decision," "resolution" or "conversion," if it has already been released as a cascade of coming effects?

<center>⸕</center>

Whether in Anders, Jaspers, or in Blanchot: The anonymous "Us" is able to address itself only in a time that both closes and opens up in the form of the deadline – namely by anticipating its own form, that is, coming from the end, as still pending. Only where time has become the deadline is it possible that humans are "awakening to the idea of the whole," "giving form" to it, and realizing their good end. In a peculiar way, the universal of humanity as a good end requires a threat, a deadline, an end that must be prevented in order to be able to name and identify itself, to unify itself and realize the good. It is an idea of the whole, a universality, that does not function on the basis of a "human nature," but that is supposed to realize itself in the shared consciousness of an apocalypse. It is the universal of a "naked apocalypse" that nevertheless, in a minimal way, remains connected with the revolutionary apocalypse.

In the climate catastrophe, it seems, this awakening to the idea of the whole fails to happen not only because its temporality thwarts the end time of nuclear reason, but also because in the orientation towards a revolutionary unification, unity has itself increasingly been seen as an expression of a particular violence. The link or alliance of the "naked apocalypse" and revolutionary unification that thinking established in the search for its collective subject seems to have been dissolved or renounced today.[8] If the universal of humanity returns in theoretical discussions of climate change, then at best – for example in Dipesh Chakrabarty – as an emphatically "negative universal," (Chakrabarty 2009, 222) as a blank space that can and should no longer positively subsume the particular – not even in a utopian vanishing point. Humanity is no longer conceived as the carrier and manifestation of universal reason that would be capable of "elevating the negative to negativity." The subject of action appears as a crossed-out universal – not because of the negative of its potential future annihilation, but because of the different catastrophic temporal structure and the rejected perspective of the whole. "It is not a Hegelian universal that emerges dialectically out of the movement of history, or a universal of capital that is brought forth by the present crisis."[9]

In place of a divided humanity, whose unification is still pending, as a realization of reason prepared by the possibility of extinction, now instead comes the diagnosis of a preemptively unified humanity, whose divided essence must be unmasked. In the face of the climate catastrophe as the contemporary scenario of annihilation or extinction, it is not the idea of a unification of humanity that is actualized – by a danger that refers to it as a whole – but the idea of a division that aims to render the very concept of humanity obsolete (Latour 2017, 246). In contrast to the idea of unification, an

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[8] The fact that today the nuclear threat does not spread fear and terror in the same way as it did in the Cold War is perhaps not only a sign of a contemporary "apocalypse indifference" and "apocalypse blindness," indicating a rational normalization of the danger, its repression or obfuscation. Perhaps the integration of this threat is conditioned by the fact could be integrated is conditioned by the fact that the desire for unification associated with it, the realization of reason, has already expired.

[9] Ibid. In his widely discussed paper Chakrabarty further argues that climate catastrophe and the Anthropocene configure humanity *as species*. The history and historiography of globalization, which have been coupled with a specific critique of the concept of humanity, are replaced by the history and historiography of climate change, in which the universal humanity returns in a strange way – as an appeal to an *impossible subject*: for humanity as species (similarly as before as multitude, mass, etc.) represents a collective identity that remains phenomenologically empty – since we are only one instance of the concept of species.

incompatibility is emphasized that reaches cosmological proportions. This incompatibility is understood as a present struggle or *war* of mutually incommensurable world conceptions and cosmologies, of opposing temporalities with their different references to the apocalypse.[10] If the nuclear threat was about man awakening to the idea of the whole in the face of the bomb, which at the same time prefigured it negatively, the "Anthropocene" posits the impossibility of giving consistency to man as a collective being (and not, as is sometimes mistakenly assumed, the negative form of a new sovereignty of the *anthropos*).

In the renewed deadline of the climate catastrophe that understanding sets, that we set ourselves, it is as if "we" are in search of a collective subject, while at the same time the mode of this search – the bet on the realization of universal reason – appears as part of the problem. The "us" as a whole, as a totality, no longer finds a time, a space. Today, humanity and the world appear as the two void spaces, as the never subsiding phantom pain of a *post-apocalyptic* present of catastrophe.[11] Against an idea of unification – be it as a preliminary unification by invoking a common human "nature" or as a unification through the world-creating realization of universal reason – today there is an orientation towards provisional and fragile associations insisting on distinction and difference.

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10   The division here is drawn between "humans living in the epoch of the *Holocene*" and "the *Earthbound* of the *Anthropocene*" who fight with each other, *go to war with each other* (ibid., 248). "Whereas Humans are defined as those who take the Earth, the Earthbound are *taken by it*" (ibid., 251).

11   The term "post-apocalyptic" easily leads to misunderstandings because of the different time horizons that can be implied. Thus, the present can be identified as "post-apocalyptic" in various respects: 1. On the one hand, the birth of Western modernity can itself be seen as an end of the world, an apocalypse, insofar as it was believed to be the realization of a secular kingdom and thus at the same time brought an end of the world for all those who had to make room for this kingdom. The end of the world, as Deborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro have pointed out, has thus already taken place several times – depending on who is talking about it and from where. The ends of the world, apocalypses multiply (Cf. Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017). 2. However, the present can also be qualified as "post-apocalyptic" if, as Alenka Zupančič argues, one must assume that the catastrophic event does not lie in the future, but has already been triggered, is unfolding in the present (Cf. Zupančič 2017). 3. The present turns out to be "post-apocalyptic" again because it no longer proceeds from the event thinking of a fundamental revelation, because the apocalypse no longer means the unveiling or inauguration of a divine kingdom, but a "naked apocalypse," an "apocalypse without kingdom" (Cf. Anders 1981, 207). 4. Srećko Horvat uses the term "post-apocalyptic melancholy" as an emphatic concept, which he explicitly turns against the mourning over a past loss, with the intention of averting this loss in the present. Anticipatory mourning over a future loss, or the loss of the future as such, on the other hand, is problematic because it has a normalizing effect in the present (Cf. Horvat 2021, 54).

No "decision" or "resolution" (*Entschluss*) can realize reason if the apocalypse is no longer a mere possibility or probability of the future, if the end is not temporalized from the outset of an eventual point of destruction; no "conversion" (*Umkehr*) can lead man back to his lost origin, revive his forgotten essence, if the distance, the difference, always persists in the relation to essence and origin; no "awakening" (*Erwachen*) can unite humanity in the face of catastrophe, if its extended dividedness seizes the idea of the whole, if the world and its end have been multiplied. The atom bomb, as the ultimate counter-image of reason, was the last wager of thought on reason's dialectical realization. It represents the last – tragic or comic – attempt to envision a final unification of humanity via negativity. To repeat it today, for example by re-invoking a deadline in/of climate catastrophe, in the role of a contemporary end-time activist, is bound to fail. The ecological transformation implies temporalities that thwart this attempt in advance and territories that sabotage its premises. It is as if we can no longer awaken to the idea of the whole, not only because we are already *in the midst of it*, but also because this idea has become fragmented, dispersed at its core. Our time-space is no longer that of an apocalypse of reason.

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Marx on Alienation and the Good
Lena Weyand

In this chapter I aim to connect discussion of the good with a critique of our present form of living. That can be done, I think, by looking at Marx's early writings. His notion of alienation and his understanding of the human life-form underwrite an idea of the good that which can be used to criticize our current mode of production.

In his section on alienated labour in the 1844 manuscripts, Marx seems to give four descriptions of how human beings are alienated under capitalism. The first and second description seem to describe a concrete situation:

1. the factory worker's being alienated from the product which she produces in her factory-work (Marx 2015, 84f), and
2. her being alienated from the work she does while on her factory shift (ibid., 87).

However, the third and fourth seem to be more abstract:

3. the worker's being alienated from being a *Gattungswesen*[1] (ibid., 88-89) and
4. her being alienated from the other humans (ibid., 92).

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1   The word *Gattungswesen* is often translated as "species being", even though "genus-being" might be more accurate given the Feuerbach/Hegel background. For comparison see Khurana (2022a). As I am unsatisfied with either translation, I will use ´*Gattung*` and ´*Gattungswesen*` as such and not translate them.

In my text I will start by presenting the first two descriptions of alienation (I) and present a problem that may arise if one tries to understand them by themselves (II). Afterwards I want to look at the descriptions three and four (III), to show that the first two can only be made sense of when thought about through the understanding of three and four (IV).

What I want to show is that *alienation* describes a relation between humans gone wrong; being alienated from an object and being alienated from your own activity means nothing else than being alienated from other humans. And that means relating to the other in a bad way. Finally, after explaining how this is connected to the idea of a human life-form, I want to show that Marx's term *alienation* implicitly shows that seeking the good means seeking the good of humans as *Gattungswesen*, as humans living together (V). I aim to show that *alienation* is not only a tool to criticize the living conditions under capitalism but a way into reflection on the good.

I.

As a start I will highlight Marx's first and second descriptions of alienation from the 1844 manuscripts. In the first the factory worker is alienated from the product which she produces in her factory-work. For example, the factory worker works in the shoe factory of the factory-owner. The result of her work - the shoe - is not her shoe: it belongs to the factory-owner, who owns the material, leather, rubber that the shoe is made of, and the tools and sewing machines.

In short, the first description of alienation that Marx gives us is the alienated relation between the worker and the product of her labour.

Marx's use of the term *labour* (in German: *Arbeit*) is not exclusive to wage-labour under capitalism. I read Marx's term *labour* as the human form of being productive, where producing a product is understood in a broad sense. One can make a shoe, producing the shoe - making the object - or one can make a part of a forest into the resource *wood* by building a fence around it. Marx speaks of *Vergegenständlichung* (ibid., 84), which translates as objectification. The act of labour is an act of objectification. That means roughly that the way humans act in and on the world is a way of making the world their object.[2] The alienated form of labour under capitalism still falls under this

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2   In his reading of alienation Christian Schmidt traces Marx' notion back to Hegel's notion of appropriation in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (2023, 368f).

definition, although under capitalism, the worker's performing her labour is an act of objectification in an alienated way. The product, the objectification of her labour, is not her product. The objectification of the labour is the realization (*Verwirklichung*) of labour, but with capitalist labour the worker doesn't realize herself, she de-realizes (*entwirklicht*) herself. Producing the product in this way means alienating herself. The product of her work is alien to her. But Marx says even more: the product *confronts her with hostility* (ibid., 84f). Labour as objectification is a process in which a producer produces a product. In the alienated form, the product is not the producer's product; it is external and that makes it hostile. So far I have not explained why the product's being external to the producer makes it hostile towards her. I will get back to this after looking at the second description of alienation.

Here Marx takes a look at the act of labouring itself. The factory worker is making the shoe, but she is not making the shoe because she wants or needs a shoe; she didn't decide that shoemaking was the kind of labour that she wanted to engage in today. She is making the shoe that will be the factory owner's shoe because the factory owner told her so and because she is buying the use of her labour-power for a time.

Marx says that an act of production that produces something which is external to the producer must be an act of exposure (ibid., 87). The worker produces an external product, a shoe that isn't hers. An act of exposure is described further as a kind of labour by which the worker is not affirming herself but negating herself. Other images he uses are *not feeling at home while working*, *not feeling well*, *the act of labour not belonging to her being*, *not having free energy*, or a line with which a lot of working people can identify: *if she doesn't have to do the labour, she immediately stops* (ibid., 88).

In short: it is forced labour. Not only does the product of labour under capitalism not belong to the worker: the act of labour itself, the use of labour power, also does not belong to the worker. It belongs to someone else.

In alienation 1 the product is alienated. Marx says that this makes the worker alienated from the outside world (*entfremdet von der sinnlichen Außenwelt*) (ibid., 85f), alienated from the object (*entfremdet von der Sache*) (ibid., 89). [3]

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3   The worker becomes alienated from the outside world because "The worker can create nothing without nature, without the sensuous external world. It is the material in which his labour realizes itself, in which it is active and from which and by means of which it produces" (ibid., 86, translated by the author).

In alienation 2 the activity is alienated. Marx says that human living is nothing else than activity.[4] Human lives are themselves activities of those humans, and so the human who is engaged in an alienated activity is alienated from herself, alienated from the subject. What I want to get into focus is the relation between subject and object here. In labour, in objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*) the human does not just make an object; in being productive and being defined as the one that she is through being productive, she also makes herself. Description one and two of alienation are thereby describing two perspectives on the same production process.

II.

I argue that one is not able to understand these two descriptions of alienation, the alienation from the product/object and the alienation from the production/subject without understanding Marx' description 3 and 4, which describe the alienation from the *Gattungswesen* and the other humans.

If one nevertheless tries to understand 1 and 2 independently, and tries to change the organisation of production to realize an unalienated production, then there is a possibility of conceiving a false plan for doing so. I will now describe such a false plan with an example.

If one understands alienation to be, in essence, the distorted relation between a worker and their product, or between a worker and their act of producing, then one might suggest that to get rid of alienation, these relationships need to be altered. In the alienated state, the product is not the worker's product, and so it would be a logical step to suggest that the product should instead be made the worker's own.

Or that when the worker leaves the factory and starts their own little business – on Etsy for example – producing their own shoes, then their labouring would no longer be forced. The worker would neither be alienated from the outside world, nor from herself. The produced shoe would not confront the Etsy shop owner with hostility.

This solution is at best an apparent one, though. Sadly, if the worker gets rid of her boss and become her own boss, then the products might be theirs to sell, but their labouring is still alienated, and so is the product which she produces. The labour is still forced.

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4   "[…] denn was ist Leben als Täthigkeit […]" (ibid., 89).

To see why that is the case, I will take a look at forced labour. Forced labour is further described by Marx as the labour that does not satisfy a need, but it is a means to be able to satisfy a need that lies outside of it (ibid., 88). The labour thereby is forced by something outside of it. The Etsy shop owner is producing a shoe, but that shoe is not made to satisfy the producer's need for a shoe. Its production is a means to satisfy another need, paying rent and buying food with the money made from selling the shoe.

According to Marx, in the classless society[5] labour itself would become humans' first need; and being a need itself, labouring thereby would satisfy a need directly (ibid., 125f).

The Etsy shop owner who has to produce one product in order to sell it, to be able to buy the things that satisfy her needs, still stays alienated from her product. And even if a self-employed worker can decide whether to work in the morning or at night, her labour is still not free. Even if in a more indirect way, her labour is still for sale.[6]

The solution to alienation in 1 and 2, understood as a distorted relation between worker and product and worker and act of production, cannot be making the product and the act of production the worker's own. The problem seems to not be just that product and act of production are not hers, but that they are somebody else's.

To shed more light on this I will turn to description 3 and 4 of alienation in the 1844 manuscripts. I want to get into view how the relation between the worker and her product and the worker and her production are connected to the relation between the worker and the others.

III.

As I said at the beginning, Marx formulates alienation in version 3 as the human being alienated from their *Gattungswesen*. But what does *Gattungswesen* mean? I will quote a sentence from the Paris manuscripts of 1844 that, I think, contains the key features of *Gattungswesen*.

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5   The relevance of class and the classless society will be explained later in the text.

6   This concern was anticipated, according to Gourevitch (2014), by c19th American labour movements, who came to argue that to be a free worker required collective ownership of the means of production, rather than everyone owning their own means of production.

> The human is a *Gattungswesen*, not only in practically and theoretically
> making the *Gattung*, both   his own and that of the other things, his ob-
> ject, but – and this is simply another expression of the same thing – but
> also in that he relates to himself as the present, living *Gattung*, by relating
> to himself as a *universal*, and thereby free being.[7]

I read *Gattungswesen* as the practical self-conscious life of humans. Humans
are self-conscious. Humans, Marx says, make themselves, their own *Gattung-
swesen* into their object. *Gattungswesen* is a self-relation, it is not the knowl-
edge of something other, it is the knowledge of oneself.[8]

This self is further described in the quotation as the present living *Gattung*.
The *Gattung* of humans is not an abstract essentialist form, but rather it is
living and concrete. Humans don't relate to themselves as to a human *an-
sich*, or the idea of a human. They relate to themselves as the concrete living
humans that they are. Human living is relating to oneself as living; relating
to oneself means livingly relating to a living being. Marx uses the word
present (*gegenwärtig*) to point out that humans' relation to themselves is
not an empirical, but a practical relation. They don't relate to themselves as
something they know from the outside, by looking at it, or hearing about it.
Their knowledge of themselves is not a knowledge of a fact in the world. In
living they relate to themselves as living - here and now. Their knowledge of
themselves is practical.

The quotation further says that the human relates to herself as a universal
and thereby free being. Marx's term "universality" is an intersubjective term.
Humans don't make themselves their object as individuals acting alone, but do
it together. I know myself by knowing you and by your knowledge of myself
and *vice versa*. Together we form the present living *Gattung,* and thereby every
one of us is formed by the present living *Gattung*, but also every one of us is
forming the present, living *Gattung* itself. Humans relate self-consciously to
each other, the form of their *Gattung* is them-in-their-mutual-relating.[9] That

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7   "Der Mensch ist ein Gattungswesen, nicht nur indem er praktisch und theoretisch die Gat-
     tung, sowohl seine eigne als die der übrigen Dinge zu seinem Gegenstand macht, sondern
     - und dieß ist nur ein andrer Ausdruck für dieselbe Sache - sondern auch indem er sich zu
     sich selbst als der gegenwärtigen, lebendigen Gattung verhält, indem er sich zu sich als einem
     universellen, darum freien Wesen verhält" (Marx 2015, 89, translated by the author).

8   Even though Hegel is not using the term Gattungswesen, he writes about how different living
     beings can be distinguished by their different relating to their genus. For a detailed discussion
     on that see Khurana (2022a and 2022b). See also Karen Ng's forthcoming work on *Species-
     Being: Ethical Life Between Humanity and Nature*.

9   I thank Alec Hinshelwood for this formulation.

is what Marx means when he says humans are universal, act universally and are thereby free.[10]

The universality is the relation to themselves and the world that is made possible by their being self-conscious. In the quotation Marx also says that humans make the *Gattung* of other, non-human things their object. Human's theoretical knowledge is also gained mutually.

It is very important that *Gattungswesen* doesn't describe the being of a particular human, as a particular human. It is the being of the human as such. So not all particular humans have a *Gattungswesen*, a nature, and together they are *Gattungswesen* plural. Rather, *Gattungswesen* is singular.

I will try to make this clearer by quoting a different short passage only a page further than the one quoted before. In this passage Marx writes about the alienated *Gattungswesen*.

> Alienated labour not only (1) alienates nature from the human and (2) alienates the human from himself, from his own acting function, from his activity of life; because of this it also alienates the human from the *Gattung*; it converts the *Gattungs*-life into a means for his individual life. Firstly, it alienates *Gattungs*-life and individual life, and secondly it converts the latter, in its abstraction, into the end of the former, also in its abstract and alienated form.
>
> For in the first place labour, *activity of life*, *productive life* itself appears to the human only as a *means* for the satisfaction of a need, the need to sustain physical existence. But productive life is *Gattungs*-life. It is life-creating life. The whole character of a *Gattung*, its *Gattungs*-character, lies in the kind of its activity of life, and free conscious activity constitutes the *Gattungs*-character of the human. Life itself appears only as a *means of life*.[11]

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10   It is rather dark why Marx uses the notion *free* here. In Hegel the term is central and centrally linked to, though not exhausted by, the idea of the good of individuals who bear rights. Given that Marx rejects the idea of rights, his notion of freedom must differ from the Hegelian one.

11   "Indem die entfremdete Arbeit dem Menschen 1) die Natur entfremdet, 2) sich selbst, seine eigne thätige Funktion, seine Lebensthätigkeit, so entfremdet sie dem Menschen die *Gattung*; sie macht ihm das *Gattungsleben* zum Mittel des individuellen Lebens. Erstens entfremdet sie das Gattungsleben und das individuelle Leben und zweitens macht sie das leztere in seiner Abstraktion zum Zweck des ersten, ebenfalls in seiner abstrakten und entfremdeten Form.Denn erstens erscheint d[em] Menschen die Arbeit, die *Lebensthätigkeit*, das *produktive Leben* selbst nur ein *Mittel* zur Befriedigung eines Bedürfnisses, des Bedürfnisses der Erhaltung der physischen Existenz. Das produktive Leben ist aber das Gattungsleben. Es ist das Leben erzeugende Leben. In der Art der Lebensthätigkeit liegt der ganze Charakter einer species, ihr Gattungscharakter, und die freie bewußte Täthigkeit ist der Gattungscharakter d[es] Menschen. Das Leben selbst erscheint nur als *Lebensmittel*" (Marx 2015, 90, translated by the author).

Not being alienated would mean being the *Gattungswesen* in being the individual one and being the individual one in being the *Gattungswesen*. In unalienated form that means that one is only the individual one because that individual is *Gattungswesen*, and that individual is *Gattungswesen* because it is the individual one. Both are included in the other. When she is alienated, the individual one splits being individual from being a *Gattung*. And as Marx says, in a second step she makes the *Gattung*, the living with others, relating to others, into a means of being the individual. Life itself, which is the *Gattung*, as he says, appears only as a means of life. Unalienated life, living as a *Gattungswesen* would mean to live life-creatingly – creating the life of the *Gattung*.[12] That can easily be misunderstood as if in the unalienated form it would be the other way around: that the individual life would be the means for the *Gattungs*-life. But that is not the case. In unalienated form, the *Gattungs*-life and the individual life are not alienated from each other. They are the same.[13] The *Gattungs*-life is the form of the individual life. And this form is a relation between the individuals.

In conclusion, humans, in sharing the *Gattungswesen* — which is a living form of relation, a relation that means making oneself and the world their object, not alone but mutually, through each other — in being *Gattungswesen*, relate to each other. This relation is the relation of living through each other. That is why the 4th way of defining alienation in the manuscripts reads: the worker is alienated from other humans. I hope by now it is clear that 4 is implicit in 3.[14] Being alienated from the *Gattungswesen* is being alienated from the other human. Our form is our relation to each other, being alienated from that form thereby is being alienated from each other. Now I want to go back to the descriptions 1 and 2. I want to show how these two also describe a manifestation of a bad relation between humans.

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12 That does not mean that in the alienated live there is no life creating. It means that the life that is created is an alienated life is one that is split. The unalienated life would be life-creating in the unalienated sense, creating the life of the *Gattung* and of the individual in unity.

13 This is the point in which Marx's notion *Gattungswesen* differs from that of Hegel. Marx criticizes Hegel; he thinks that Hegel's *Logic* involves, in the end, an opposition between "general" and "particular" which ruins the idea of *Gattungswesen*. See Marx (1992, 155).

14 Marx says that "the human is alienated from her *Gattungswesen*" means that the human is alienated from the other. See Marx (2015, 92).

IV.

According to Marx's description 1 of alienation, the relation between worker and her product is alienated. The alienation is described as the worker's production resulting in something that is not hers. But the alienation between the worker and her product cannot be solved by making the product hers. The problem is not that it is not hers, the problem is that it is somebody else's.

The relation between the person owning the product, in this case the factory owner, and the worker who produces the product is the problem. Private property is a relation between people and not a relation between people and things. In relations of private property humans are alienated from their *Gattungswesen* and therefore alienated from each other.[15] The worker who produces a product under conditions of private property as a result is alienated from her product.

To understand that, we have to take a closer look at the relation between the worker and the factory owner. Both the worker and the factory owner have needs that underlie their activities. The worker needs money, and therefore she works, the factory owner needs cheap labour power, and therefore she employs the worker.

Both exchange things (money and the use of labour-power), and *via* that exchange they satisfy each other's needs. But it is important to point out that they are not satisfying each other's needs as an end in itself. They satisfy each other's needs as a pure means in order to satisfy their own needs.[16] Now we can finally understand why the product of the labour of the worker is external and Marx says that it thus becomes hostile towards her. The needs of the worker and the factory-owner are independent from each other, in the sense that their actions are not directed towards the satisfaction of each other's needs. As Marx said in the quotation cited before, the *Gattungs*-life, the living with others in its alienated form, has turned into a pure means to the individual life. The worker and the factory owner engage in a shared *Gattungs*-life, but they only do so as a means to their individual life. That is the way that their relation to each other (and their *Gattungswesen*) is alienated. Now we can finally

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15 This also goes the other way around: they are alienated from each other and therefore alienated from their *Gattungswesen*.

16 This problem is one that comes up in every exchange. The exchange described here is a special one, though, given that there is a hierarchy or disbalance in power between the factory-owner and the worker, which results in the factory-owner exploiting the worker. I will not at this point look further into the special case of exploitation. For my argument it is enough that the factory-owner and the worker engage in exchange.

understand why the product of the labour of the worker is external and that it thereby becomes hostile towards her. It is a symbol of the factory-owner who takes something away from the worker. The more the worker produces, the more things are external to her, the more things she produces that belong to somebody else and that somebody else will not share with her. That means that by working she produces a world from which she is excluded – a hostile world. That humans in the alienated state use each other as means doesn't merely mean that they don't support each other enough. In creating their own worlds in the economic forms of private property, they create worlds that exclude the others and are thereby hostile to them.

In the alienated relation between humans, everybody is looking out for their own individual life. My needs are my needs and your needs are your needs. I might instrumentally satisfy your needs, but only as a means for you to satisfy mine. The alienated relation between people means that each is only trying to satisfy their own needs, and understands their needs as being independent from those of the others. That means that they see their life as being independent from the life of the other.

The same goes for Marx's description 2 of alienation. That my labour is alienated from me is not a problem that I can solve by working on my relationship to my labouring. My labour and I are alienated because I have to sell the use of my labour-power to you. Because I am alienated from you.

The worker's end is her individual life, her individual survival, the factory-owner's end is her individual life, her individual profit. One needs a worker, the other needs the money to buy food and pay her rent, so she sells the use of her labour-power to the factory-owner and thereby alienates her labour from her needs. She is not active because she wants to be active, she is active because she wants to be able to eat.[17]

In unalienated form the satisfaction of your need would no longer be a mere means to the satisfaction of mine; it would be an end in itself, it would be my need too.

At the end of section (I) I pointed out that being alienated from the product/object and being alienated from the production/subject are two perspectives on the same thing. In *Vergegenständlichung* the subject and the object are *vergegenständlicht*. But because the human being is a universal being, a *Gattungswesen*, we partake in this *Vergegenständlichung* together – even in alienated

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17   In Marx's *Kapital* there is a further description of the forces of capital that explain how the worker-product relation becomes so distorted. See the chapter *Die sogenannte ursprüngliche Akkumulation* (Marx 2013, 741–802).

state. That means that description 1, 2, 3 and 4 are all different perspectives on the same process.

At the end of the *Excerpts from James Mill*, Marx gives a glimpse of what an unalienated relation between humans might look like. This unalienated relation will give the direction to the idea of the good.

> Let's say that we had produced as human beings: each of us would have *doubly affirmed* ourselves and the other in their production. 1. In my *production* I would have *objectified the peculiarity* of my *individuality* and therefore I would have both enjoyed an individual expression of life in doing so as well, I, while looking at the object, would have known my personality as an *objective and sensuously perceptible* force *beyond all doubt*. 2. In your consumption or use of my product I would immediately have the enjoyment, both in my knowing of that I satisfied a *human* need with my work, that means, that I had objectified the human nature and thus had made a fitting object for a need of another *human* being. 3. I would have been for you the *mediator* between you and the *Gattung*, so would have been known and experienced by you as an addition to your own being and as a necessary part of yourself. Thus, I would know myself to be confirmed both in your thoughts and your love. 4. As well as I would have the enjoyment in knowing that I have immediately created your expression of life with my individual expression of life, that is in my individual activity I immediately *confirmed* and *realized* my true nature, my *human, communal being*.
>
> Our productions would be as many mirrors from which our being would shine towards each other. The relation thereby becomes mutual: from your side be done what is done from mine.[18]

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18 "Gesetzt, wir hätten als Menschen produziert: Jeder von uns hätte in seiner Produktion sich selbst und den anderen *doppelt bejaht*. Ich hätte 1. in meiner *Produktion* meine *Individualität,* ihre *Eigentümlichkeit vergegen*ständlicht und daher sowohl während der Tätigkeit eine individuelle *Lebensäußerung* genossen, als im Anschauen des Gegenstandes die individuelle Freude, meine Persönlichkeit als *gegenständliche, sinnlich anschaubare* und darum *über allen Zweifel erhabene* Macht zu wissen. 2. In deinem Genuss oder deinem Gebrauch meines Produkts hätte ich *unmittelbar* den Genuss, sowohl des Bewusstseins, in meiner Arbeit ein *menschliches* Bedürfnis befriedigt, also das *menschliche* Wesen vergegenständlicht und daher dem Bedürfnis eines anderen *menschlichen* Wesens seinen entsprechenden Gegenstand verschafft zu haben, 3. für dich der *Mittler* zwischen dir und der Gattung gewesen zu sein, also von dir selbst als eine Ergänzung deines eigenen Wesens und als ein notwendiger Teil deiner selbst gewusst und empfunden zu werden, also sowohl in deinem Denken wie in deiner Liebe mich bestätigt zu wissen, 4. in meiner individuellen Lebensäußerung unmittelbar deine Lebensäußerung geschaffen zu haben, also in meiner individuellen Tätigkeit unmittelbar mein wahres Wesen, mein *menschliches,* mein *Gemeinwesen bestätigt* und *verwirklicht* zu haben. Unsere Produktionen wären ebenso viele Spiegel, woraus unser Wesen sich entgegenleuchtete. Dies Verhältnis wird dabei wechselseitig, von deiner Seite geschehe, was von meiner gesch[ieht]" (Marx 1985, 443-463, translated by the author).

In this passage Marx describes production outside of conditions of private property, "we had produced as human beings" and not as alienated beings that are alienated from what they actually are. Humans' true nature, their *Gattungswesen*, is their being as a communal being, relating to the other's living, relating to the other's needing.[19] Because being a true human, I am no longer alienated from myself, I am also not alienated from my product and my act of production. "In my *production* I would have *objectified the peculiarity* of my *individuality*" and in the product of my action I "would have known my personality as an *objective and sensuously perceptible* force *beyond all doubt*". That means that if I am not alienated from the other, not alienated from my *Gattungswesen*, I am no longer alienated from my product and the act of production and that makes me able to relate to my true human self. This chain also works the other way. But the product of my action doesn't have to be mine in the sense of the Etsy shop owner. In "producing as a human being", I have produced the product for your consumption, your need moved me to act. Your consumption would give me "immediat(e) [...] enjoyment" (*den Genuss*). This immediate enjoyment would be twofold, on the one hand the enjoyment of satisfying a human need, and on the other the enjoyment of having "*confirmed* and *realized* my true nature, my *human, communal being*" by satisfying a human need.

If my need is internal to yours and yours to mine, labour is no longer forced. Because then it is not instrumental anymore, it is a need itself. In being alienated from the other, I am also alienated from my true self. Relating badly to you, means relating badly to myself. But in unalienated labour, my work, my activity is an immediate answer to your need and my need and thereby directly satisfying a need and pleasurable.

The structure of a need is often spelled out in a form of an *in-order-to relation*: *a* needs *x* to *y*.[20] Let's say: *a* needs to eat in order to be a human. But that sounds as if *a:* 1. is a human and that 2. from being human it follows that *a* needs to eat. But *a's* being human is actualized in her eating. Her being human, her needing to eat and the eating form the unity of her living activity. Being human means living humanly – by acting.[21] And acting is a result of a need.

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19   For a discussion on the intersubjectivity spelled out in Marx notion of human being and a critique of intersubjectivity in Hegel see Hinshelwood (2024). Hinshelwood shows how Hegel falls into practical solipsism and how Marx tries to solve this.

20   See for example Nancy Fraser (1989).

21   To Marx being human means being active as a human. Such being active can be described as acting or as working (*Tätigsein, arbeiten*). Labour under capitalism is a distorted way of acting.

Human needs are the beginning of our acting. My need, all things equal, is an immediate reason to act. I know my needs in a practical way; my needing and my acting on my needing *is* my living activity. It is my being. What I need is not what I need in order to be me, my needing is who I am.

In the case of the human life-form–what I am–what a human is cannot be described in an empirical way. The human life-form is practically described with the term *Gattungswesen*. But *Gattungswesen* is not an abstract form "that lives in every individual human being" (Marx 2015, 6). Being *Gattungswesen* is an activity. What a human is is determined by the social relations they are in, their essence actualized is the "ensemble of social relations" (ibid.). That is what living through each other comes to. I come to be through your living and you come to be through my living. Not being alienated from my *Gattungswesen* thus describes the relation between humans in this form of living together.[22]

Coming back to my needs, since they are in unity with my being, and my being is dependent on the others, my needs are not distinct from those of the others. Knowing myself and knowing my needs are the same. Both are known practically, by living my human life. Living my human life means our living through each other, therefore my needs are known to me in knowing myself in living with you. In living with you I also know your needs and act on them in the same immediate way that I act on my needs. The notion *Gattungswesen* describes the relation between humans in that their needs are no longer distinct from each other. Your needs are part of my needs and *vice versa*. In the unalienated form, in the form of *Gattungswesen*, which is the human life-form, my needs are your needs; my needs are dependent on your needs and *vice versa*.[23]

A solution to alienation, as a social problem, lies therefore in our relation to each other. In the unalienated state humans live *through* each other. My needs cannot be distinct from your needs; if they are distinct we are alienated from each other and we therefore do not live a truly human life.

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22   Khurana writes the following in a discussion of Aristotle and Thompson's concept of the form of life: "Man is not only a "social animal" that co-operates to satisfy its own needs, but a "political animal" that determines the form of shared life in social confrontation. This does not mean that it is simply left to our arbitrary and capricious determination of what constitutes our form of life and its material sociality; but it does mean that the realisation of our form of life is dependent on its conscious articulation by us and that material sociality is overdetermined in a particular way by our political sociality" (Khurana 2022a, 380).

23   That is why Marcuse (*der eindimensionale Mensch*) can refer to "false needs" at present time, while Adorno (*Thesen über Bedürfnisse*) at the same time can state that it makes no sense to distinguish between right and false needs (in the unalienated state). So we can say with Marcuse, that there are false needs today, and we can say with Adorno that there is no way of making a distinction between false and true needs, as human beings in present time.

That is why the social or political solution to being alienated from the product of my work and my working activity cannot lie in that relation itself. It has to lie in my relation to the other human beings. Because property relations are relations between human beings and in the relation of private property humans are alienated from each other, the political solution to alienation lies in the abolition of private property in the means of production. It is such property relation that defines the classes of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, therefore its abolition is key for realization of the classless society. That is why the classless society in Marx has such relevance, because it is directly connected to the true nature of human beings, as communal beings.

V.

Finally, I want to say something about the idea of the good which I find to be implicit in the conception of alienation that I just presented.

Following Marx, I think the good cannot be ascribed to a single person; good can only be a relation. There is no meaning to the idea of a good person, but there is meaning to people relating well, and thus relating as human beings. Being human means our relating humanly to each other; being human with and through the other.

According to Phillipa Foot, the human life-form tells us what a good exemplar of a human being is.[24] But because in the case of the humans their life-form doesn't describe a being, the being of the singular human, there is therefore no meaning to the idea of a good human. The life-form of humans describes their form of relation; therefore human goodness lies in human relating.[25] Humans cannot *be* good, but instead they can only relate well. Whereas it is meaningless to say "this is a good human being", it can be meaningful to speak of a good human relation, or *a human that is relating well.*[26]

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24 See Foot 2001. Martha Nussbaum also does something in that direction in her capability approach.

25 In the (neo-) Aristotelian understanding, the life-form of humans is described in parallel to that of animals. For example, orcas co-operate in hunting seals. If one orca is not co-operating to hunt, it is seen as a bad exemplar of an orca. Similarly, human co-operation is described as one of the contents of the human life form, and a human who is not co-operating accordingly is seen as a bad example of his kind. In contrast, I think that how humans relate to each other is not one of the contents of their life-form, but the form of their life-form. Humans are self-conscious; their being is always already intersubjective.

26 As shown above, what a human is cannot be described in an essentialist abstract form that is then actualized in every particular, in one better, in one worse. To be able to say that there is

If what is good for me and what is good for you cannot be distinct from each other, in the way described before, then how do we understand the idea of the good? How can we know how not to live an alienated life?

The idea of the good is not something that lies outside of humans and something which they try to reach. I think the good is the human *Gattungswesen* that has properly actualized itself. This is people meeting each other's needs. The activity of togetherness is the good. The act of relating is the good. The idea of the good is the full actualization of the relation between you and me that is *Gattungswesen*.[27]

Following Marx, I think that being a self-conscious living being means to know oneself in a practical way. And knowing ourselves means knowing what is good for us. Humans live together. But I understand this togetherness not in co-operating to serve our own private goods with each other's help. I think we live *through* each other. And we know ourselves and our needs *through* each other. If our current state of living and our way of producing isn't making it possible to live humanly in a good way, then this way of living has to change. The idea of the good lies in our human nature, in us being *Gattungswesen* and points to a future in which our means of production have changed in a way that make unalienated life possible.

In summary, I think we should try to understand human nature in such a social or interdependent way, and this should be a focus of further investigations into human needs and the idea of the good.[28]

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a particular one that is a good one, there would be a standard needed to which the particular could be compared. Our human life-form does not give such an essential standard, though; therefore there is no meaning to the good human exemplar.

27   There lies the main distinction between Marx and Hegel's theory. Marx theory calls for practical political action, and the realization of the idea of the good in our current mode of production is impossible for him. Philosophy for Marx has to become practical. See Marx (1990, 6).

28   I want to thank the participants of the international conference: *Idea of the Good. Die Idee des Guten bei Kant und Hegel* in May 2022 for helpful comments on my presentation, and especially Zdravko Kobe and Sebastian Rödl for organizing it. Furthermore, I want to thank the participiants of *Interdisziplinäres Promovierenden-Kolloquium der Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes: Das Tun der Freiheit* im November 2022 for helpful remarks. Alec Hinshelwood and Dawa Ometto kindly read my draft. For this help I am grateful.

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Summary

The Idea of the Good in Kant and Hegel is the first book to provide a comprehensive treatment of the good as a central concept in classical German philosophy, while at the same time opening up areas of interest that have not traditionally been associated with this subject. The contributors to this volume, eminent scholars in fields related to the topic, engage with current debates on Hegel, Kant, morality, and the fundamental status of the good. They offer a systematic introduction to the philosophical implications of the concept of the good, but more importantly, they expand the horizon of possible interpretations and encourage critical reflection.

In philosophy, the importance of the idea of the good is bound up with the fact that it can be used at different levels of reflection. While it holds an essential position from the very dawn of classical thought, with Plato seeing it as the absolute metaphysical principle, the idea seems to have only gained ground in the contemporary world, becoming a common marker of praise or recognition in informal speech, for instance, describing a thing, a person, a feeling as good. In a broader sense, the good refers to a normative or moral dimension of actions and willing, which is also the entry point of the book. In this respect, thinking the idea of the good through the relationship between Kant and Hegel becomes of crucial importance.

Because of the omnipresence of the good, which is particularly difficult to define unambiguously, and the difficulties to determine the content of the good a priori and formulate the moral law accordingly (namely: you ought to do the good!), Kant addressed this impasse by first formulating the moral law and then determining the good accordingly. For Kant, morality is a special duty that obliges finite rational beings to act morally simply because they are

rational. His idea of autonomy, his insistence that the good cannot be faithful to the pleasant or the useful, even his second Copernican turn, according to which the good must obey the moral law - and not vice versa - can be understood as a corollary of Kant's peculiar association of moral duty with the unity of reason. But when he descends to the level of action, he runs into problems of how to accurately demonstrate the determinism of his idea of the good, or how to explain convincingly why a moral subject can act evil.

Hegel, on the other hand, attributed this difficulty to the fact that Kant's conception of reason was abstract, formal, impoverished and ultimately quite inadequate. In order not to renounce Kant's legacy, he had to formulate a much richer conception of the reason, in which thinking and willing, the particular and the universal, subject and substance, are involved in the free, self-determining activity of the concept. This, according to Hegel, is the minimum if we are to grasp adequately the idea of the good. For him, the particular will ought to do what is to be done, that is, do the good, however, it can also easily fall into the temptation of making its own particularity a universal principle, which it would put into practice through its actions, and thus become evil.

By engaging in discussions surrounding the irreparable gap between good and evil, the book provides the tools for a fruitful dialogue with contemporary philosophical orientations on moral implications, as well as offering directions for the future of practical philosophy.

Povzetek

Ideja dobrega pri Kantu in Heglu je prva knjiga, ki celovito obravnava dobro kot osrednji pojem v klasični nemški filozofiji, hkrati pa odpira področja raziskovanja, ki s to temo tradicionalno niso bila povezana. Sodelujoči strokovnjaki se v knjigi vključujejo v aktualne razprave o Heglu, Kantu, morali in temeljnem statusu dobrega. Na sistematičen način predstavijo filozofske implikacije pojma dobrega, predvsem pa širijo obzorje možnih interpretacij in spodbujajo bralca h kritičnemu razmisleku.

V filozofiji je pomembnost ideje dobrega povezana z dejstvom, da jo je mogoče uporabiti na različnih ravneh refleksije. Medtem ko ima bistven položaj že od samega začetka klasične misli, ko jo je Platon obravnaval kot absolutno metafizično načelo, se zdi, da se je ta ideja v sodobnem svetu le še bolj utrdila, saj je v neformalnem jeziku postala pogost izraz pohvale ali priznanja, na primer pri opisovanju stvari, osebe ali občutka kot dobrega. V širšem smislu se dobro nanaša na normativno ali moralno razsežnost dejanj in hotenj, kar predstavlja tudi izhodišče te knjige. V tem pogledu postane bistvenega pomena mišljenje ideje dobrega skozi odnos med Kantom in Heglom.

Zaradi vseprisotnosti dobrega, ki ga je še posebej težko enoznačno opredeliti, in težav pri apriornem določanju vsebine dobrega ter ustreznem oblikovanju moralnega zakona (namreč: dobro moraš storiti!), je Kant to zagato obravnaval tako, da je najprej oblikoval moralni zakon in šele nato ustrezno določil dobro. Za Kanta je morala posebna dolžnost, ki končna razumna bitja zavezuje k moralnemu ravnanju preprosto zato, ker so razumna. Njegovo idejo o avtonomiji, njegovo vztrajanje, da dobro ne more biti zvesto prijetnemu ali koristnemu, celo njegov drugi kopernikanski obrat, po katerem mora dobro ubogati moralni zakon – in ne obratno –, lahko razumemo kot posledico njegove posebne

povezave moralne dolžnosti z enotnostjo razuma. Toda ko se spusti na raven delovanja, naleti na težave, kako natančno dokazati determinizem svoje ideje dobrega ali kako prepričljivo razložiti, zakaj lahko moralni subjekt ravna slabo.

Hegel pa je to težavo pripisal dejstvu, da je Kantovo pojmovanje uma abstraktno, formalno, osiromašeno in na koncu precej pomanjkljivo. Da se ne bi odrekel Kantovi zapuščini, je moral oblikovati veliko bogatejše pojmovanje uma, v katerem sta mišljenje in volja, partikularno in univerzalno, subjekt in substanca vključeni v svobodno, samoodločujočo dejavnost pojma. To je po Heglovem mnenju minimum, če hočemo ustrezno razumeti idejo dobrega. Po njegovem bi morala partikularna volja storiti to, kar je treba storiti, se pravi, storiti dobro, vendar pa lahko tako zlahka pade v skušnjavo, da bi svojo partikularnost naredila za obče načelo, kar bi udejanjila skozi svoje delovanje in tako postala zla.

Knjiga z vključevanjem v razprave o nerazrešljivem razkoraku med dobrim in zlim ponuja podlago za ploden dialog s sodobnimi filozofskimi smermi o moralnih implikacijah našega delovanja ter hkrati predlaga smernice za prihodnost praktične filozofije.

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